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THE WORD OF GOD

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THE WORD OF GOD

A series of short meditations on the Sunday Gospels published in Rome by "The Society of Saint Jerome for the Diffusion of the Gospel."

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✠WILLIAM CARDINAL O'CONNELL

Archbishop of Boston.

February 5, 1921.

PREFACE

These explanations of the Holy Gospel were first edited in weekly pamphlets which were published in Rome by "The Society of Saint Jerome for the Diffusion of the Gospel." They appeared from the first Sunday of Lent, 1919, until Quinquagesima Sunday, 1920. They were then put forth in book form under the title of "The Word of God."

One hundred and twenty thousand copies of this series of short sermons have already been published, and it is hoped that this English translation of them does not fall too far short in expressing the unction, the simplicity and the beauty of the original Italian.

It will be observed that the Gospel of a proximate feast day is occasionally substituted for the Gospel of the Sunday, as, for example, on the Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost, the Gospel considered is that of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. It may also be noted that on four of the Sundays during Lent, the Gospel proposed for meditation is not the Gospel of the Sunday, but one from a ferial Mass of the same week.

Grateful acknowledgment of helpful suggestions is made to Rev. Louis F. Kelleher, D. D., of Saint John's Ecclesiastical Seminary, Brighton, Mass.; Reverend Laurence B. Killian, S. T. L., of St. Catherine's Church, Summerville, Mass.; and Rev. Henry A. McGarvey, S. J., of Boston College.

THE TRANSLATOR.

INTRODUCTION

"It gives me great pleasure to learn of the translation from Italian into English, of the volume of short meditations on the Gospels for every Sunday of the year, written by Monsignor Francis Borgongini-Duca, professor of dogmatic theology at the Propaganda, Rome, and secretary of the Tribunal of the Sacred Penitentiary.

"Knowing the author personally and admiring his qualities of mind and heart; his sound learning, his rare powers of exposition as a teacher, his priestly zeal and earnestness, I feel confident that his book will be helpful to many souls in this country."

JOHN BONZANO,
Archbishop of Melitene.
Apostolic Delegate.

April 30, 1921.

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FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

During the season of Advent the Church endeavors to prepare her children for the proper observance of the Feast of the Nativity. The penitential character of this time which marks the beginning of the liturgical year is indicated by the purple color of the sacred vestments.

THE ADVENT

"At that time, Jesus said to His disciples: There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars: and upon the earth distress of nations, by reason of the confusion of the roaring of the sea and of the waves, men withering away for fear and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world. For the powers of heaven shall be moved; and then they shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty. But when these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is at hand. And He spoke to them a similitude: See the fig-tree, and all the trees: when they now shoot forth their fruit, you know that summer is nigh; so you also, when you shall see these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is at hand. Amen I say to you, this generation shall not pass away, till all things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." Luke xxi, 25-33.

A GLEAM of light penetrated through the sombre dusk enshrouding the vesper office which the Church enjoined her sacred ministers to recite yesterday evening. It is the first announcement of the coming of the feast of Christ-

mas,—"Behold, God is coming from afar and the splendor of His glory shall fill the universe." [1] Each year, this joyous festival, returning, is ever welcome, always new.

Every Christian should be prepared for the birthday of the Saviour. Every soul should be a pure and spotless cradle, fragrant with the flowers of virtue, to receive the new born King. "Rejoice, O daughter of Sion! Exult, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, the Lord comes and all the saints come with Him, Alleluia!" [2]

The best preparation for the coming of the Christ-child consists in the practice of austere penance. Wherefore, the Church reminds us of another coming of Jesus, His advent as a Judge at the end of the world. The Church would seem to tell us through the Gospel of the Mass that He Who is about to come to us now as a smiling, loving Infant, will come another day to be our Judge. Woe to us, therefore, if we do not receive Him now.

The epistle of the Mass also breathes an extraordinary eloquence. "It is now the hour for us to rise from sleep, for now our salvation is nearer than when we believed. The night is passed, and the day is at hand. Let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light, . . . the Lord Jesus Christ." [3]

As the warrior at dawn awakes from sleep, puts on his armor and is anxious to try his strength, so in the dawn of this Christmas season, every soldier

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[1] Antiphon to the Magnificat, Divine Office, Saturday before the first Sunday of Advent.

[2] Lauds, Divine Office, First Sunday of Advent.

[3] Romans xiii, 11-14.

of Christ should take up the arms of light and struggle against the powers of darkness. The first rays of morning are already glowing in the eastern sky. Let no one slumber in slothful tepidity, for the graces inspiring to a Christian life are entering into the souls of all!

"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ."[1] He has humbled Himself to become one of us. He has assumed our flesh and blood to sacrifice Himself that we may live. In order to put on Jesus Christ, it is necessary that His love enter into our hearts, and our love enter into His heart. Thus we shall resemble Him as younger brothers.

* * *

One source of comfort and encouragement in this battle is the example and the inspiration of the martyrs. One of the most illustrious martyrs whose feast day is commemorated during this time of the year is Saint Cecilia, Virgin of Rome. Glorious, youthful daughter of a noble Roman family, humble servant of God and friend of all the poor, Cecilia gained for Christ on the day of her marriage the soul of her pagan spouse. At the same time, she renewed her vow of virginity, and consecrated herself once more to God.

The prefect of Rome, persecuting her in the name of an unjust and cruel law, was unsuccessful in his attempt to stifle her with steam in her own house. He then ordered her to be beheaded. The executioner struck three brutal blows, but for three days Cecilia's soul still lingered in her virginal body.

[1]Romans xiii, 14.

The body of the virgin martyr still remains in her own house, which is now the Church of Saint Cecilia. In a niche below the magnificent altar there is a beautiful statue of the saint, sculptured from pure white marble. It represents her as she was struck down by the blows of the executioner, a victim of the love she bore for Jesus and the love which Jesus bore for her.

Every priest reads in the Lauds of the Divine Office on the feast of Saint Cecilia the following antiphon,—"Cecilia, Thy handmaid, O Lord, has served Thee as industriously and as faithfully as toils the bee." The busy, tireless bee gathers sweetness from all the flowers. And likewise thou, O Christian, shouldst learn to emulate the sacrifice of this tender maiden, and make every action of the trying day a flower in thy crown of glory!

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE PRECURSOR

"At that time, when John had heard in prison the works of Christ: sending two of his disciples, he said to Him: Art Thou He that art to come, or do we look for another? And Jesus making answer, said to them, Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them; and blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in Me. And when they went their way, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John, What went you out into the desert to see? a reed shaken with the wind? But what went you out to see? a man clothed in soft garments? Behold they that are clothed in soft garments are in the houses of kings. But what went you out to see? a prophet? yea, I tell you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written (in the Prophecy of Malachias), Behold I send My angel before Thy face, who shall prepare Thy way before Thee." Matthew xi, 2-10.

IN this Gospel, the Church presents for our consideration, the austere figure of Saint John the Baptist. And if we follow the example which he has given to us, we shall fittingly prepare ourselves for the coming of the Saviour. Faithful to Jesus even unto death, the mission of Saint John was to make souls ready to receive the coming Messias. The echo of his voice, and the engaging

uprightness of his character, attract and encourage us even today.

Even before his birth, the Baptist was sanctified. This sanctification was accomplished in the mountainous country of Judea, at the voice of Mary, when the yet unborn precursor felt the presence of the hidden King of Kings. The first caresses, the first smiles of love which he received as an infant, were the caresses and smiles of the Blessed Virgin.

In his youth he fled into the desert, guarding in the midst of the solitudes the priceless treasure of his purity. He led a miraculous life of spotless innocence, of rigorous, unflinching penance. His only garment was a rough covering made from the skin of a camel.

All Jerusalem and all Judea went down into the valley of the Jordan to hear him preach. Sinners were touched with remorse at the thought of the lives which they had been leading, and cleansed in the waters of the Jordan, they resolved to lead good lives in preparation for the coming of the Redeemer. Thus was fulfilled the prophecy of Zachary, when he gave him the name of John. "And thou, child, shall be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways." [1]

Other men had gone into the desert to pray, but they had wavered at the first hardships as reeds on the banks of the Jordan swayed in the wind. John, however, was faithful to his call and persevering in his resolutions.

When he saw Jesus for the first time, he cried out,

[1] Luke 1, 76.

"Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sin of the world." [1]

John wished to leave his followers in the care of Jesus. He was already within the shadow of death when he sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus if He were the Messias,—not that John himself had any doubt, but in order that they also might be convinced of the identity of Him "the latchet of Whose shoe" [2] John was not worthy to loose. This was John's last testament, for his glory was henceforth to fade before the glory of Christ as the light of the morning star pales in the dawning light of the sun.

It was to these disciples that Jesus gave that memorable eulogy on Saint John,—"Amen, I say to you, there hath not risen among them that are born of woman a greater than John the Baptist." [3]

Saint John was now in prison. He had had the courage to face a shameless king and to rebuke him for his lust,—"It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." [4] From that day, the woman who was the king's associate in evil vowed the death of John the Baptist.

It was the birthday of the king, and a wondrous banquet was served at court in his honor. Herod sat in the midst of his princes and tribunes, crowned with flowers, hailed and flattered by all. To the music of the harps and zithers, a young girl, the daughter of Herodias, was dancing a Greek dance. "'Ask of me what thou wilt,' cried the monarch,

[1] John i, 29.
[2] John i, 27.
[3] Matthew xi, 11.
[4] Mark vi, 18.

flushed with pleasure. 'Whatsoever thou shalt ask, I will give thee, though it be the half of my kingdom.' " [1] It was the opportunity the incestuous wife and dissolute mother had hoped for, and she prompted the girl to make this horrible request, "I will that forthwith thou give me in a dish the head of John the Baptist." [2] "O God, what horror!" cries out Saint Ambrose, "a girlish heart desires no grace, no favor, or no pardon, but instead demands an execution." Shortly afterwards, the executioner brought in the head of the martyr on a silver dish. The blood was still warm, the eyes half closed so not to gaze, it seemed, upon the authors of the deed, the mute lips still proclaiming in their silence, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." [3]

Thus did this saint of God live, and thus did he die.

* * *

When the kings in the Orient set out on a long journey, they were accustomed to send heralds and messengers before them to prepare the way. And so the great King sent a precursor to prepare the way for Him, to prepare the hearts of men to receive Him. Realize, Christian soul, how important is this preparation. The prayer in the Mass today reads, "Arouse our hearts, O Lord, to prepare the way for Thine only-begotten Son, that through His coming we may be made worthy to serve Thee with pure minds and hearts."

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[1] Mark vi, 22, 23.
[2] Mark vi, 25.
[3] Mark vi, 18.

FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

"The angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David: and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." Luke i, 26-28.

RAISE thy thoughts to Heaven, Christian soul, summon forth all the powers of thy mind to contemplate the grandeur of her whom the angels salute as "full of grace." [1] Dispelling all the shadows, mounting above all the evil on the earth, Mary shines resplendent in the firmament of Heaven. More glorious and more pure in her magnificence than the driven snow on Alpine summit, the very mention of her name thrills every heart with love and reverence. The dark mantle of sin which had enshrouded and still enshrouds every soul born into the world never cast even a shadow on the soul of God's Immaculate Mother.

Man had been created as the master of the earth and the heir of Heaven. He was to live the life of the angels, and was called the child of God. But man sinned, and sin marred all his beauty and his glory. Even the virgins and martyrs, whose lives were fragrant with the perfume of heavenly graces, were stained with the blot of original sin. Mary alone from the very moment of her conception was entirely free from this tarnish, "a woman clothed

[1] Luke i, 28.

with the sun." [1] "She is the brightness of Eternal Light, and the unspotted mirror of God's Majesty, and the image of His goodness." [2]

In the overwhelming triumph of the Blessed Virgin over sin, it was necessary to blot out the stain of the disgraceful fall of our first mother.

Over the world had echoed and reechoed the thundering curse of God on the serpent tempter, "Because thou hast done this thing, thou art cursed among all cattle and beasts of the earth, upon thy breast shalt thou go, and earth shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel." [3] Mary crushed the head of the serpent, and the sons of Eve became the sons of Mary. The children of death were transformed into children of life. And in honor of Mary's victory, the Church makes use of the hymn which the warriors of Bethulia sang to Judith in honor of her victory over the Assyrians, "Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honor of our people." [4]

* * *

Mary is in our midst today.

As the Gave river winds its way at the foot of the Pyrenees mountains, in southern France, it passes a cave in the rocks. In this grotto, garlanded by the wild rose creeping through the crevices, the

[1] Apocalypse xii, 1.
[2] Wisdom vii, 26.
[3] Genesis iii, 14, 15.
[4] Judith xv, 10.

Immaculate Virgin appeared to a little girl, Bernadette Soubiroux, who was praying there in her honor. The first apparition occurred on the eleventh day of February, 1858. Resplendent with celestial brightness, with a smile upon her face, the Virgin looked with maternal love upon the little child, and the child gazed back with love at her. The virginal feet of the Madonna rested on the rocks in the midst of the briers and brambles, and she seemed to say, "The thorns which are now in your pathway will become roses in your crown in Heaven."

A miraculous fountain gushed forth from the grotto, and the cures which have been wrought at this shrine of the Blessed Virgin are known all over the world. A beautiful church has been erected above the grotto, and its walls are covered with votive tablets and emblems, each one of which symbolizes the gratitude of some poor sufferer to whom Mary has granted relief. Thousands of crutches have been left there by those who had come to Lourdes crippled and gone away with their deformities entirely corrected. The Immaculate Virgin of Lourdes is a perennial unfailing source of blessings and favors for all who address her with the "Hail Mary."

"O Mariner, whoever thou art," says Saint Bernard, "tossed about on the waves of life's stormy sea, knowing the peril of the dark waters threatening to engulf thee, fix thy gaze on the Star of Hope in the Heavens and cry, 'Mary!' In difficulties, in doubt and in anguish, think of Mary and call on Mary to help thee. Let her name be ever on thy lips; let her love be ever in thy heart. If thou fol-

lowest her, thou shalt not wander from the course; if thou prayest to her, thou shalt not despair. If she helps thee, thou shalt not weary; if she guides thee, thou shalt reach the harbor."

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

"At that time: the Jews sent from Jerusalem priests and Levites to John, to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and did not deny; and he confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he said, I am not. Art thou the prophet? And he answered, No. They said therefore unto him, Who art thou, that we may give an answer to them that sent us? What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaias. And they that were sent were of the pharisees. And they asked him, and said to him, Why, then, dost thou baptize, if thou be not Christ, nor Elias, nor the prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water; but there hath stood one in the midst of you Whom you know not; the same is He that shall come after me, Who is preferred before me, the latchet of Whose shoe I am not worthy to loose. These things were done in Bethania beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing." John i, 19-28.

AS the feast of the Nativity approaches, the liturgy of the Church becomes more jubilant. "The Lord is near; come let us adore Him," is the invitatory which is constantly repeated in the recitation of the Divine Office.

The third Sunday of Advent is also known as "Gaudete" Sunday, and it is so called because the introit of the Mass begins with the word "Gaudete," which means, "Rejoice." The joyful character of

the day is indicated by the flowers on the altar, by the substitution of rose colored vestments for the sombre purple of Advent, and by the note of gladness which sounds throughout all the psalmody. In the epistle of the Mass, the voice of Saint Paul rings out in exultation, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say, rejoice. Let your modesty be known to all men. The Lord is nigh. Be solicitous about nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgving, let your petitions be made known to God. And the peace of God which surpasseth all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." [1]

The Gospel in the Mass tells of the Priests and Levites whom the Sanhedrin sent to inquire of Saint John the Baptist if he were the Messias. Saint John answered at once, "I am not the Christ." [2] And quoting the words of the prophet Isaias, John replied, " 'I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord." ' [3] Saint John further explained that his baptism was a simple penitential rite of preparation, " 'but He that shall come after me is mightier than I, Whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. He shall baptize you in the Holy Ghost and fire." ' [4] Thus, the first announcement of the dawn of Christianity was a proclamation of joy, and, therefore, it is called "Gospel," or good tidings.

From the day of this announcement, the lives of the saints were lives of supreme happiness. They

[1] Philippians iv, 4-7.
[2] John i, 20.
[3] John i, 23.
[4] Matthew iii, 11.

were to be visited at times with difficulties and disappointments, but consoled by the thought that Jesus was nigh, their troubles could not oppress them. Saint Lucy affirmed before her impious, cruel judges that no human power could put out, or even diminish, the light which shone in her soul.

Jesus! Thou Who givest such beauty to the things of the earth, Who dost adorn the flowers of the field with delicate fragrance and bloom, the birds of the air with brilliancy of color and enchanting notes of song, deign to grant to us Thy children the sublime happiness of receiving Thee worthily at Christmas time! Make our souls beautiful with Thy Heavenly graces, adorn us with every virtue, inspire our hearts with tremendous power to love Thee, make our voices eloquent to praise Thee! Jesus! Thou art Innocence and Goodness! Thou art Life and Love Itself. We long to possess Thee. Jesus! Come to us.

Reflect, O Christian soul, how happy we shall be at Christmas. Consider, also, dearly beloved, how sad indeed, and dark and gloomy, must be the heart which is enshrouded in the darkness of the world, a life in which every pleasure is anxiety, every impulse, selfishness, and every hope, despair.

We may raise our hearts, therefore, on high. The responses in matins of the Divine Office, bright with the approach of the Saviour, tell of peace: "Ascend the highest mountain, O prophet, raise thy voice with all thy strength, cry out to the cities of Juda, to the inhabitants of Sion, and announce the gospel of peace. Justice shall prevail, and peace will abound. Jesus is the Prince of Peace."

O peace, so much invoked, the peace which the world cannot give, peace, the refreshment of souls thirsting for truth, the repose of hearts sighing for true love, return to us! Return to the poor, suffering people of the world, who wish harmony to prevail among all nations!

During this week, the Church begins the great novena for the Feast of Christmas, and she purifies herself by fasting for the coming of the Infant Saviour. The voice of John the Baptist invites us to practise mortification, in order to break down the last barriers, to make smooth the pathway to our souls. And the consolation which we shall implore by our prayers and by our tears is that the peace of God may be restored among all nations, that the peace of God may be present in families, that the peace of God may enter into all hearts.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

EXPIATION OF SIN

"In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and Philip his brother tetrarch of Iturea and the country of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilina, under the high priests Annas and Caiphas; the word of the Lord came to John the son of Zachary, in the desert. And he came into all the country about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of penance for the remission of sins; as it is written in the book of the sayings of Isaias the prophet: A voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight His paths. Every valley shall be filled; and every mountain and hill shall be brought low: the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways plain, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." Luke iii, 1-6.

THE enumeration of the high dignitaries of the world which appears in today's Gospel, has all the frightful solemnity of a sentence of justice decreed on this world, fast plunging onward to its ruinous end. The most awful personages in human history pass in review before our eyes. Tiberius, Pilate, Herod and Caiphas, profaners of the throne and of the altar, personify the depravity of the times and the special iniquity of the chosen people.

Such was the state of the world when "the word

of the Lord was made unto John, the son of Zachary, in the desert." [1] Saint John then left his desert solitude and entered into the country about the Jordan, to exhort men to do penance for their sins. God wished to redeem the human race, but He was to require of sinners some indication of their repentance and some atonement for the offences which they had committed.

The Baptist preaches penance to us also,—"Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of penance. . . . For now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire." [2]

God is infinitely good, but He is also infinitely just. Wherefore, if we have sinned, we must do penance. Sooner or later, we must atone for our sins, either by penance through loving choice, or by fire as an obligatory punishment.

Every time that God warns sinners, His threats are but acts of His mercy. Saint Augustine says that the one who cries out before he strikes does not really wish to wound. And so God cries out to the sinner to do penance, since "now is the acceptable time; behold now is the day of salvation." [3]

There are some men, however, who persist in blindness, who do not care to consider that "the great day of the Lord is near." [4] But even with such men, the Lord is merciful. God is good, and He sometimes strikes in this life in order not to punish

[1] Luke iii, 2.
[2] Luke iii, 8, 9.
[3] II Corinthians vi, 2.
[4] Sophonias i, 14.

in the next. "If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow." [1]

Penance disarms justice. "Thou, O sinful man," warns Saint Ambrose, "hast placed thy foot on the brink of a chasm. Quickly withdraw it or thou shalt fall headlong into the abyss. Do not delay in casting off the bonds of sin. Thy moments of mercy are numbered."

* * *

Saint Francis Borgia, the fourth duke of Gandia, and lord of the court of Charles the Fifth, had entered the religious life, and had become one of the most austere penitents of the Church. He was traveling one day and met a nobleman, a former acquaintance, who was startled to see him so poorly clad. His friend anxiously implored Saint Francis to lessen the rigors of his penances. The saint told him that he was not unprovided for, as an attendant always went before him who furnished everything necessary. The nobleman further inquired about the identity of the attendant, and Saint Francis replied that the attendant who prepared everything for him was the thought of what he deserved, and so he always found everything much more pleasant and satisfactory than he expected.

The event which influenced Francis Borgia to leave the world is well known. He had been entrusted with the duty of accompanying the body of the Empress Isabella to Granada. When the coffin was opened the other members of the court fled in horror at the sight, but Francis remained immovable before the corpse. "And thou wast my

[1] Isaias i, 18.

empress," he murmured. "Isabella, where is thy majesty, where thy beauty now?"

The voice of Saint John the Baptist rings out full and clear, "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of penance. The axe is laid at the root of the trees." [1] Tremble, lest this warning, if we despise it, be for us a transfixing sword of remorse for all eternity.

FEAST OF THE NATIVITY

On the feast of the Nativity of Jesus, each priest is permitted to celebrate three Masses. In former times, the Holy Father celebrated Midnight Mass in the Basilica of Saint Mary Major, before the relics of the manger-crib in which the Infant Saviour was placed at His birth. The Pope offered his second Mass at dawn in the Church of Saint Anastasia, as Christmas is the anniversary of her martyrdom. The third Mass was celebrated later in the morning in the Basilica of Saint Mary Major.

On the days which follow Christmas, the Church commemorates the feast of Saint Stephen, the first martyr, Saint John, the beloved Apostle, and the Holy Innocents. The roses of martyrdom and the lilies of virginity form a fragrant garland of feast days succeeding this great feast day—the birthday of Jesus Christ.

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

"At that time, there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This enrolling was first made by Cyrinus, the governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary his espoused wife, who was with child. And it came to pass, that when they were there, her days

[1] Luke iii, 8, 9.

were accomplished, that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds watching, and keeping the night watches over their flock. And behold an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round about them, and they feared with a great fear. And the angel said to them: Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people; for this day is born to you a Saviour, Who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God, and saying: Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will." Luke ii, 1-14. (The Gospel of the Mass at midnight.)

"GLORY to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will." [1] This is the song of the angels. The dark, damp stable is transformed into a paradise of light and song. The King of Kings is born. We can hardly refrain from weeping with emotion. All the doors in the city of Bethlehem at which His Blessed Mother and Saint Joseph have knocked have been closed before them. A stable is His palace, and a pallet of straw His bed.

His face is radiant with goodness and with tenderness. The tears which He sheds are not tears of grief, but tears of love. His Virgin Mother with great reverence kneels before Him. She wraps Him

[1] Luke ii, 14.

in swaddling clothes and warms His infant face and hands with her kisses. Mary smiles at Jesus, and Jesus smiles at her.

We also, brethren, should kneel in reverence before the crib of the Saviour. He has been born an infant because He wishes to be loved, and no soul need fear to approach Him.

It is not necessary to go far distant in search of Jesus. Every church is today a luminous grotto, and every altar a crib. Light and splendor and rejoicing are within; cold and darkness are without

"Jesus is born, come let us adore Him!" are the words of the liturgy. Heaven has showered its sweetness throughout all the world today. Yes, for today the miracle is repeated. In our chalices, the Heavenly Dew is sparkling. On our patens, Jesus smiles.

Let us, therefore, with reverence prostrate ourselves with the angels before Him. The Church suggests a prayer to us: "O Lord, who renewest Thy nativity in our minds, open our hearts also to Thy life, and in the sacred mysteries refresh us with Thy Precious Blood and nourish us with Thy Sacred Body."

* * *

There is the story of a little white flower which is the delight of many fervent souls to hear and to consider. Sister Teresa of the Infant Jesus, "the Little Flower," was born on the second day of January, 1873. She chose a "small way," as she said, "to go to Heaven,—the way of spiritual infancy, of entire abandonment and trust in God." When she was fifteen years of age, she entered the Carmel of

Lisieux. "O Jesus, my love," she wrote, "at last I have found my vocation. My vocation is love. Great works are forbidden to me; I am not able to preach the Gospel, nor to shed my blood. I am only a poor little girl, but I can scatter flowers, which will diffuse their perfume around the throne of God; for scattering flowers means embracing every opportunity to make some small sacrifice. I wish to take advantage of every small occasion to show my love. I wish to suffer through love." In a veritable outpouring of herself in charity, she exclaimed, "Why can I not tell, O Jesus, of Thy kindness, Thy condescension to all little souls? Was it not Thee Who taught me Thy secrets, and canst Thou not now reveal them to others? Look down, I pray Thee, and attract with Thy divine countenance a great number of little souls, and make of all these souls a legion of little victims of Thy love."

FEAST OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS

"At that time an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: Arise, and take the Child and His mother, and fly into Egypt; and be there until I tell thee: for it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him. Who arose, and took the Child and His mother by night, and retired into Egypt; and He was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the prophet, saying: Out of Egypt have I called My Son." Matthew ii, 13-15.

IN the midst of her rejoicing at the birth of Jesus, the Church is plunged into sorrow. The joy of the Christmas season changes to sadness for the moment at the thought of the massacre of the Holy

Innocents. Herod wished to kill the dreaded rival to his throne, and he hoped to slaughter Him at His very birth. And so he decreed the cruel sentence of death on all children "two years old and under." [1]

The very thought of the execution of this terrible sentence chills our hearts with horror. Frenzied mothers snatch their babes from their cribs and flee in terror to a hiding place, but the infant cries betray their presence to the brutal soldiers of the tyrant. A furious struggle rages between the unarmed mothers, shielding their loved ones, and the soldiers with their swords of death. "If there be any guilt," the mothers cry in anguish, "this guilt is ours; slay us and spare the innocent; before you kill them, pierce our hearts with the swords or else we die of grief." But all the pleadings, all the struggles of the mothers, could not save the helpless infants, and the swords reeked with the blood of the babes martyred for Jesus Christ.

* * *

Not far from Bethlehem there is the monument of Rachel. When the sons of Benjamin heard that distant relatives were snatched from their homes by the enemy and were sold into slavery, it seemed to the prophet Jeremias that he heard their long, sad cry as if they were sobbing for rest. And today, at the anguished wail of the mothers, Rachel raises her head from the grave once more, and, wounded to the heart, moans with them. She does not wish to be consoled, for her children are no more.

And yet, although the Innocents were massacred,

[1] Matthew ii, 16.

they became triumphant. Baptized in their own blood, unable even to pronounce the name of Christ, they proclaimed Christ gloriously by their death. They are the first bloom of martyrs in the Church, —flowers opening before their time in the midst of the frost, and fallen before the chill breath of the storm. "Blessed art thou, O Bethlehem, land of Juda," exclaims Saint Augustine, "that in one day offered to God such a spotless holocaust of innocence. Blessed are you, O children, who in your very infancy, before any trials, merited the imperishable crown of glory." Not without profound emotion does the Church in the Divine Office of this feast meditate on the sublime words, vibrant with faith, which the prophet Jeremias addressed to Rachel: "Let thy voice cease from weeping and thy eyes from tears for . . . there is hope for thy last end . . . and the children shall return to their own borders." [1]

When we think that we have suffered unjustly from injuries or from calumnies, and we lament on this account with God, and complain to men, we should think of these little ones cut down by the tyrant's sword, who were certainly much more innocent than we are. We should reflect that Jesus, the stainless Lamb of God, endured the most atrocious torture, and that following in the footsteps of Jesus no one who bears the name of Christian is exempt from drinking of the chalice of His suffering.

Adversity and suffering are not great evils. The great, the only real evil, is sin. Sin makes us enemies of God; adversity opens for us the gates of Paradise. No one could have favored the children of

[1] Jeremias xxxi, 16-17.

Bethlehem by love as Herod favored them by hate. We should, therefore, endure trials and suffering with great faith. The world inflicts troubles on us to rob us of the virtues which God has given to us. And indeed we shall see the day when for this sole reason, because of our virtues, men will hate and revile us. "Blessed are ye when they shall revile you and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in Heaven." [1]

FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD

OBEDIENCE

"At that time, after eight days were accomplished that the child should be circumcised, His name was called Jesus (Saviour), which was called by the angel before He was conceived in the womb." Luke ii, 21.

THE first solemn rite of the Jewish religion by which a new-born infant is formally enrolled as a participator in the divine promises made to the chosen people is the occasion of great rejoicing by all. The observance of this religious service in the life of John the Baptist, the precursor of the Saviour, is narrated in the first chapter of Saint Luke. All the family of Zachary united to do honor to the newly elected scion of the race.

There is no celebration, however, in honor of Jesus. The extreme poverty of the Child who had been born in a manger, precluded the usual rejoicing.

[1] Matthew v, 11, 12.

Jesus had come to free others from the yoke of this law, but He wishes to subject Himself to it. His passion begins today. He receives His baptism of blood. Eternal Purity is willing to bear in His immaculate flesh the sign of a sinful people. Nor is Jesus like other infants who suffer without understanding the reason for the pain. He understands and willingly endures it all. He seals with His own blood the name of Saviour, which He has received.

"Wherefore, when He cometh into the world, He saith: . . . 'Sacrifices and oblations, and holocausts for sin Thou wouldst not; neither are they pleasing to Thee, which are offered according to the law.' . . . 'Behold, I come to do Thy will, O God.' " [1]

"He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross." [2] From His cradle to His death on Calvary, Jesus trod only one pathway,—the road of humiliation and blood.

It is true that He shed tears while He underwent the painful rite of circumcision. He was a child, and resembled His brethren in all things except in sin. These tears were a sign of his love for us. Later on in life, He will weep at the tomb of Lazarus, and the Jews present will exclaim, "Behold how He loved him." [3] Jesus sheds tears for us today, and He also sheds His Precious Blood. Behold, therefore, how much He loves us.

Mary presses her Child to her heart. And thus

[1] Hebrews x, 5-9.
[2] Philippians ii, 8.
[3] John x, 36.

our Mother begins her martyrdom. Mary suffers in her soul the pain which Jesus suffers in His body. But Mary suffers in silence because she is obedient to the will of her Father Who is in Heaven.

At the beginning of the new year, we must write this word, "obedience," in our hearts. Just as we loved the very walls of our father's home in the days of our childhood, just as we loved our good companions, who were almost brothers in our family, so also, we must love and obey our superiors, whose will is the will of God. We must be docile to them, not because of fear, but because of reverence.

Saint John Berchmans reached the heights of sanctity without any other mortification than that which he practised by obedience. "My greatest penance," he said, "is community life and obedience to the rules of my religious society."

The Kingdom of Heaven must be obtained by a battle; it must be secured by violence. "The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away." [1] When pride puts suggestions of obstinacy and rebellion into our minds, we must quickly conquer these inclinations and render to Christ love for love. To submit our wills for the love of Christ is much less than the shedding of His blood by Christ for us. Let us obey, therefore, with good wills and with generous hearts, and God will free us from the humiliating slavery of our passions. If we walk for a little time among thorns, we shall soon find the roses in Heaven.

[1] Matthew xi, 12.

FEAST OF THE HOLY NAME

"At that time, after eight days were accomplished that the Child should be circumcised, His name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel (on the day of the Annunciation) before He was conceived in the womb." Luke ii, 21.

WE may consider today, dearly beloved brethren, an inspired page in the Acts of the Apostles, a chapter which exalts the power and the glory of the name of Jesus. No human author could even approach the sublimity of the simple narrative telling of the miraculous cure of the lame man. "Peter and John went up into the temple at the ninth hour of prayer. And a certain man who was lame from his mother's womb, was carried: whom they laid every day at the gate of the temple, which is called 'Beautiful,' that he might ask alms of them that went into the temple. He, when he had seen Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked to receive an alms. But Peter, with John fastening his eyes upon him, said, 'Look upon us.' But he looked earnestly upon them, hoping that he should receive something of them. But Peter said, 'Silver and gold I have none, but what I have, I give thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk.' And taking him by the right hand, he lifted him up, and forthwith his feet and soles received strength. And he leaping up, stood, and walked, and went in with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God. And they knew him, that it was he who sat begging alms at the 'Beautiful' gate of

the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened to him. And as he held Peter and John, all the people ran to them to the porch which is called 'Solomon's,' greatly wondering. But Peter seeing, made answer to the people, 'Ye men of Israel, why wonder you at this? Or why look you upon us as if by our strength or power we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son, Jesus, Whom you indeed delivered up and denied before the face of Pilate, when he judged he should be released. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you. But the Author of Life you killed, Whom God hath raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. And in the faith of His name, this man, whom you have seen and known, hath His name strengthened; and the faith which is by him, hath given this perfect soundness in the sight of you all.' "[1]

* * *

"And it came to pass on the morrow, that their princes, and ancients, and scribes, were gathered together in Jerusalem; and Annas the high-priest, and Caiphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest. And setting them in the midst, they asked: 'By what power, or by what name, have you done this?' Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said to them, 'Ye princes of the people, and ancients, hear: If we this day are

[1] Acts of the Apostles iii, 1-16.

examined concerning the good deed done to the infirm man, by what means he hath been made whole, be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Whom you crucified, Whom God hath raised from the dead, even by Him this man standeth here before you whole. This is the stone which was rejected by you the builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is no other name under Heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved.' Now seeing the constancy of Peter and of John, understanding that they were illiterate and ignorant men, they wondered; and they knew them that they had been with Jesus. Seeing the man also who had been healed, standing with them, they could say nothing against it. But they commanded them to go aside out of the council; and they conferred among themselves, saying, 'What shall we do to these men? For indeed a known miracle hath been done by them, to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; it is manifest, and we cannot deny it. But that it may be no farther spread among the people, let us threaten them that they speak no more in this name to any man.' And calling them, they charged them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answering, said to them, 'If it be just in the sight of God, to hear you rather than God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.' But they, threatening, sent them away, not finding how they might punish them, because of the people; for all men glorified what had been done, in that which had come to pass. For the man was

above forty years old, in whom that miraculous cure had been wrought. And being let go, they came to their own company, and related all that the chief priests and ancients had said to them. Who having heard it, with one accord lifted up their voice to God, and said, 'Lord, Thou art He that didst make heaven and earth, the sea, and all things that are in them. Who, by the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of our father David, Thy servant, hast said: Why did the Gentiles rage, and the people meditate vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the princes assembled together against the Lord and His Christ. For of a truth there assembled together in this city against Thy holy Child Jesus, Whom Thou hast anointed, Herold, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, to do what Thy hand and Thy counsel decreed to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto Thy servants, that with all confidence they may speak Thy word, by stretching forth Thy hand to curses, and signs, and wonders to be done by the name of Thy holy Son Jesus.' " [1]

And today, after many centuries, Peter meets on his way poor unfortunates, who look on him as they lie in their misery. He has neither gold nor silver with which to console them. He has only a name, and a faith. At his voice, the people rise to their feet in the name of Jesus Christ, the Nazarene. By this faith, and by this name, the mission of the Pope, despite the raging of his enemies, continues immortal.

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[1] Acts of the Apostles iv, 5-30.

FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY

THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI

"When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Juda, in the days of King Herod, behold there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to adore Him. And King Herod, hearing this, was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And assembled together all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where Christ should be born. But they said to him: In Bethlehem of Juda, for so it is written by the prophet (Micheas): And thou Bethlehem, the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come forth the ruler that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod privately calling the wise men, learned diligently of them the time of the star which appeared to them; and sending them into Bethlehem, said, Go and diligently inquire after the Child, and when you have found Him, bring me word again, that I also may come and adore Him. Who having heard the king, went their way; and behold the star which they had seen in the east went before them, until it came and stood over where the Child was. And seeing the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And entering into the house, they found the Child with Mary, His mother, and falling down, they adored Him. And opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having received an answer in sleep that they should not return to Herod, they went back another way into their own country." Matthew ii, 1-12.

THE wise men who had come from the East to Jerusalem had recognized Heaven's sign of the new-born King, and had come to adore Him. For although these dignitaries from the

Orient were Gentiles, they also, in common with the chosen people, looked forward to the coming of the Messias. The fact that the Jews were not alone in expecting the Messias is attested by the historians of the time, for even outside of Palestine the dawn of a new era was confidently expected and earnestly desired. This hopeful longing is the reason, therefore, that when the Magi saw the wondrous star, they at once understood the meaning of the manifestation, and without delay began their journey to Judea. As a tribute to the Infant King Whom they were coming to adore, they carried gifts of gold and of precious ointments. The Fathers of the Church interpret the nature of the gifts as a three-fold profession of faith. The offering of myrrh, which preserves the body from corruption, indicated that the Magi recognized the human nature in Christ; by offering incense, they adored Him as God; by offering gold, they proclaimed Him a King.

"Begotten before the morning star, before all time, the Saviour has appeared in the world!" Thus sings the Church at dawn today in lauds of the Divine Office. Jesus has revealed Himself to the Gentile world, and, therefore, the feast day is called Epiphany, which means manifestation. "Let your faith be warm and fervid," exclaims Saint Leo the Great, "and exultingly rejoice, for the conversion of the Magi is the beginning of that great movement which will bring pagans to God." It is the beginning of our call to the true faith. This day marks the commencement of Catholicity or the Universality of the Church. The star has shone beyond the land of the Jewish people; it was a beacon light for all mankind.

"Arise, be enlightened, O Jerusalem," cries the prophet Isaias, "for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. . . . And the Gentiles shall walk in thy light, and kings in the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thy eyes round about, and see: all these are gathered together, they are come to thee. Thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughters shall rise up at thy side. Then shalt thou see, and abound, and thy heart shall wonder and be enlarged, when the multitude of the sea shall be converted to thee, the strength of the Gentiles shall come to thee. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Madian and Epha. All they from Saba shall come, bringing gold and frankincense, and showing forth praise to the Lord." [1]

The light of the true faith shines forth in the Church of Christ, spreading throughout all nations, lasting throughout all the ages. All dark shadows are to be dispersed, and noble-hearted missionaries are struggling in pagan lands to light the lamp of faith in all these regions. The missionary priests and sisters have sacrificed everything for the love of God. All that men and women hold dear,—life, loved ones and country,—have been cheerfully given up by them to carry the Gospel of Christ to pagan lands.

We should pray that God may increase the number of these heroes, and even though it may not be our privilege to be numbered among these valiant selected soldiers of Christ, we may still have a share in the glorious work which they are doing. We should not allow them to think that they have been abandoned by us in the trying struggle which they

[1] Isaias lx, 1-6.

are making against overwhelming difficulties. We should encourage them by our prayers, and, if it is possible, by our offerings. We should read the periodicals which tell of missionary life, missionary activities, and missionary hardships and heart-breaks. We should be apostles of good with at least the same zeal and interest with which the wicked propagate evil. For every effort, for every sacrifice, which we make for the Children of Christ as yet outside the Church of Christ, we shall receive a hundred-fold return. And if we are the means of bringing even one soul to the knowledge and love of God, our "reward is very great in Heaven." [1]

[1] Matthew v, 12.

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF EPIPHANY

JESUS AMONG THE DOCTORS

"And when Jesus was twelve years old, they going up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast, and having fulfilled the days, when they returned, the Child Jesus remained in Jerusalem; and His parents knew it not. And thinking that He was in the company, they came a day's journey, and sought Him among their kinsfolks and acquaintance. And not finding Him, they returned into Jerusalem, seeking Him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found Him in the temple sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His wisdom and His answers. And seeing Him, they wondered. And His mother said to Him, Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing. And He said to them, How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business? And they understood not the word that He spoke unto them. And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and was subject to them. And His mother kept all these words in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age, and grace with God and man." Luke ii, 42-52.

WHEN Jesus was twelve years old, He accompanied the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph on the pilgrimage to Jerusalem which they were accustomed to make every year on the day of the Pasch. Pilgrims from all parts of the Jewish

world were gathered in the Holy City to observe this solemn festival. When they had fulfilled their religious obligations, the pilgrims from Galilee united to begin their journey home. Their caravan was divided into small groups. The men who traveled on foot led the pilgrimage, and the older men and women followed, taking turns in riding on the beasts of burden. The young boys amused themselves by passing from one group to another. After seven hours of travel, shortly before dusk, the caravan stopped to prepare an encampment for the night. The families reunited, and it was then that Mary and Joseph learned that Jesus was not with the others.

Only a mother can appreciate the grief of the Blessed Virgin. In twelve years, she had never before lost sight of Jesus, and now He was lost in a crowd of pilgrims departing in all directions. O night of anguish and night of tears! Every hour that passed increased her fears and her anxieties. There was not a single cabin back along their route, at the door of which Mary and Joseph did not knock. After many vain and fruitless inquiries, worn out by their exertions and their heartaches, they finally arrived back at the temple. The two days' agony which they had endured was more terrible than death itself, and in their eyes there were no longer tears for weeping.

They entered into the hall of the Scribes. They heard the voice of Jesus. Their hearts thrilled with joy. They saw their loved One again. His face radiant with divine beauty and wisdom, He was calmly speaking with the learned doctors. "And His

Mother said to Him, 'Son, why hast thou done so to us? Behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing.' " [1] The reply of Jesus exalts Him above men: "How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"[2]

Mary and Joseph did not understand for the moment the meaning of this reply which Jesus made to them. The answer, however, was not intended for them, but rather, it was meant for us. The one purpose in the mission of Jesus is the glory of God. And even though the Saviour of the world was subject to Mary and Joseph for thirty years in order to teach us docility and obedience, at the same time Jesus wished also to remind us that we must be ready to sacrifice all of our affections, even the most holy, when the glory of God is concerned.

Reflect, Christian soul, on the meaning of this truth. Consider, that in answering the voice of Heaven, there is sometimes hesitation because of love or fear of parents.

* * *

Within a few days, all the city of Rome will turn its footsteps towards the Via Nomentana, to venerate the sepulchre of a maiden martyr, Saint Agnes. A bitter persecution of the Christians was raging, but this maiden of thirteen years did not fear to profess herself publicly to be a Christian; and even before an impious judge she persevered unflinchingly in her resolution of purity, her absolutely unconquerable love for Jesus. "The very executioner," exclaimed

[1] Luke ii, 48.
[2] Luke ii, 49.

Saint Ambrose, "was seen to tremble as if he himself were the one condemned." All those who were near her were transfixed with fear and terror; all but herself were weeping. She alone remained resolute and intrepid, for she well knew the crown of glory that she was about to gain.

If persecution should return, we have faith that in the Catholic Church there would be more than one virgin daughter happy to follow the example of Saint Agnes; that more than one young Levite would imitate the example of Saint Lawrence. But while we take pride in recalling the deeds of these glorious saints, we should not forget that we ourselves may fulfill the will of God and make progress on the way to Heaven by patiently and cheerfully enduring the various trials to which we may be subject.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

THE MARRIAGE IN CANA

"At that time, there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee: and the mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus also was invited, and His disciples, to the marriage. And the wine failing, the mother of Jesus saith to Him, They have no wine. And Jesus saith to her, Woman, what is it to Me and to thee? My hour is not yet come. His mother saith to the waiters, Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye. Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three measures apiece. Jesus saith to them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And Jesus saith to them, Draw out now, and carry to the chief steward of the feast: and they carried it. And when the chief steward had tasted the water made wine, and knew not whence it was, but the waiters knew who had drawn the water: the chief steward calleth the bridegroom, and saith to him, Every man at first setteth forth good wine, and when men have well drank, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee; and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him." John ii, 1-11.

AS the Lord was returning from Judea with six of His disciples, He passed through the town of Cana on the day of a marriage. The Blessed Virgin was among the invited guests, but Jesus and His companions had not been expected.

Hospitality and friendship, however, entitled them to be received, and they were accordingly welcomed.

A wedding ceremony in the Orient was always the occasion of great celebration. The groom was feted as a king, and his bride was honored as a queen.

The family that was celebrating the happy event on this occasion would not appear to have been a wealthy family, since seven additional guests exhausted the supply of wine. The first one to notice the scarcity of wine was the Blessed Virgin, and with solicitude for her hosts, she had recourse to Jesus. "They have no wine," [1] is her message to Him. For, although Jesus had not as yet performed any miracle, His mother knew that He had the power to do so. She did not say, "The wine is all gone," but, "They have no wine," since her concern was for the hosts and not the guests, and she wished to spare them from embarrassment and humiliation.

There are many persons who do not understand the answer of Jesus, for the phrasing retains all the idiomatic coloring of the original Aramaic language. The word "woman," with which the Lord addressed His Mother, according to the usage of the term in our language, implies a notion of harshness. But "woman" in the Aramaic language, which Jesus spoke, is a gentle and affectionate greeting. When Jesus addressed the penitent Magdalene to console her, He said, "Woman, why weepest thou";[2] when He spoke to the Samaritan woman to convert her He said, "Woman, believe Me";[3] and to His own

[1] John ii, 3.
[2] John xx, 13.
[3] John iv, 21.

Mother, in a moment of sublime tenderness as He was dying on the cross, Jesus uttered those words of infinite love, "Woman, behold thy Son." [1]

The question, "What is that to Me and to thee?" [2] also contains, in our language, the implication of a brusque refusal, but in the Aramaic language this phrase means, "Thus let it be, O Mother; the time to show My divinity to the world is not yet come." These words were as a prayer from the lips of the Saviour, for it is evident from what follows that the Blessed Virgin understood that her desire was already accomplished. "His Mother saith to the waiters, 'Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye.' " [3]

The evangelist who was present describes the scene for us. There were six great water jugs of stone, which were used for the ritual purifications, according to the Jewish custom. A great deal of the water had been used at the beginning of the feast, and Jesus had the crocks filled once more. "And Jesus saith to them, 'Draw out now, and carry to the chief steward of the feast.' And they carried it. And when the chief steward had tasted the water made wine, and knew not whence it was, but the waiters knew who had drawn the water, the chief steward calleth the bridegroom, and saith to him, 'Every man at first setteth forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse. But thou hast kept the good wine until now.' " [4]

Thus began the miracles of Jesus. The first link

[1] John xix, 26.
[2] John ii, 4.
[3] John ii, 5.
[4] John ii, 8-10.

of this wondrous chain of blessings was in the hands of Mary.

Reflect, Christian soul, how great is the goodness of this Mother, who grants us favors even without being asked. Think how great must be her power when even Omnipotence obeys her. Thou hast loved her in the most beautiful years of thy life. As a little child, thy first prayers were lisped into her ears. Through Mary, thy Mother, thou hast obtained all graces. Return then, once more, to the feet of this ever-loving Mother, who longs to press thee to her heart.

When at times thou art cast down with grief, when sorrows and cares weigh heavily upon thee, do not say nor think that thou hast no friend to help thee. Raise thy thoughts to thy Mother in Heaven, and she will turn towards thee. And at her glance, thou shalt be comforted.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

THE CENTURION OF CAPHARNAUM

"At that time, when Jesus was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him; and behold a leper came and adored Him, saying, Lord, if Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean. And Jesus stretching forth His hand, touched him, saying, I will, be thou made clean: and forthwith his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus saith to him, See thou tell no man: but go, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift which Moses commanded for a testimony unto them. And when He had entered into Capharnaum, there came to Him a centurion beseeching Him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, and is grievously tormented. And Jesus saith to him, I will come and heal him. And the centurion making answer, said, Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof: but only say the word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man subject to authority, having under me soldiers: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth: and to another, Come, and he cometh: and to my servant, Do this, and he doth it. And Jesus hearing this, marvelled; and said to them that followed him, Amen I say to you, I have not found so great faith in Israel. And I say to you, that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said to the centurion, Go, and as thou hast believed, so be it done to thee; and the servant was healed at the same hour." Matthew viii, 1-13.

AFTER Jesus had cleansed the leper of his terrible affliction, as is recounted in the first part of today's gospel, He at once left the scene of the miracle and entered into Capharnaum. The commander of the garrison in that city was not an Israelite. He was, however, a man of good will towards the Jewish people, and had even given money for the erection of a synagogue. "For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue." [1] When Jesus entered the city, the centurion came to Him, "beseeching Him and saying, 'Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy and is grievously tormented.' And Jesus saith to him, 'I will come and heal him.' " [2]

The centurion did not anticipate such an answer. At the thought that Jesus would enter into his house, he was filled with emotion. He realized that he was a sinner and that he did not merit such consideration. "And the centurion making answer, said, 'Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; but only say the word and my servant shall be healed.' " [3]

These marvelous words of the centurion have been preserved by the Church in the prayers of her liturgy. Every day at the communion of the Mass, before he receives the sacred Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, the priest repeats the prayer of the centurion,—"O Lord, I am not worthy."

The rude warrior, who had crossed the sea with the Roman armies, and had come to the Orient with

[1] Luke vii, 5.
[2] Matthew viii, 5-7.
[3] Matthew viii, 8.

his mind saturated with the phantoms of paganism, had uttered the most sublime profession of faith which up to that time had been heard in Israel. "Which Jesus, hearing, marvelled, and turning about to the multitude that followed Him, He said, 'Amen, I say to you, I have not found so great faith, not even in Israel.' " [1]

We are not worthy to receive Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and yet Jesus wishes to enter into our souls. We should partake of the "Bread of Angels" with all humility and with all love,—with humility, realizing our own nothingness, and with love, desiring to possess God Himself. "O Lord," prayed Saint Augustine, "that I may know Thee and know myself, because knowing Thee, I shall understand how worthy of being loved Thou art, and knowing myself, I shall realize how worthy to be despised I am."

* * *

Saint Francis de Sales, saintly Bishop of Geneva and learned doctor of the Church, has spoken of the consolations which a soul enjoys in the presence of Jesus. As a young priest, he settled in the town of Thonon to engage in the apostolic work of the ministry and to devote himself especially to the conversion of heretics. He had a pyx of silver made, in which to carry the Blessed Sacrament to those who were sick. If anyone approached to speak to him when he was taking the Holy Eucharist to the sick and dying, Saint Francis would tell the person, "I carry the Lord of Lords; we shall speak at another

[1] Luke vii, 9.

time." His heart throbbed with indescribable joy as he bore the God of love through the streets of the town, inspiring devotion in others by his own reverential affection. Through the Blessed Eucharist, he converted no less than seventy thousand Calvinists. Saint Vincent de Paul, who knew Saint Francis, once exclaimed, "O God, how good Thou must be, since the Bishop of Geneva is so good!"

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

"Septuagesima" is a Latin word which means seventy. The name is applied to this Sunday because it is the seventieth day before Easter. Several weeks before the beginning of Lent have been designated by the Church as weeks of special recollection and prayer. The first Sunday of this period is called Septuagesima, the second Sexagesima, and the third Quinquagesima, indicating respectively, seventieth, sixtieth and fiftieth. The violet color of the vestments, the omission of the "Gloria" in the Mass, and other austere characteristics of the liturgy signify that this is a time for penance.

THE LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD

"At that time, Jesus spoke to His disciples this parable: The kingdom of heaven is like to a householder, who went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And having agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And going out about the third hour, he saw others standing in the market-place idle, and he said to them, Go you also into my vineyard, and I will give you what shall be just: and they went their way. And again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did in like manner. But about the eleventh hour, he went out, and found others standing; and he saith to them, Why stand you here all the day idle? They say to him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith to them, Go you also into my vineyard. And when evening was come, the lord of the vineyard saith to his steward, Call the laborers, and pay them their hire, beginning from the last even to the first. When therefore they were come that came about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first also

came, they thought that they should receive more; and they also received every man a penny. And receiving it, they murmured against the master of the house, saying, These last have worked but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us that have borne the burden of the day and the heats. But he answering, said to one of them, Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst thou not agree with me for a penny? Take what is thine, and go thy way: I will also give to this last even as to thee. Or, is it not lawful for me to do what I will? is thy eye evil, because I am good? So shall the last be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few are chosen." Matthew xx, 1-16.

MEN take their places in this small world as workers who gather in the morning for employment. The voice of the Father of the great human family is heard in the midst of the turmoil of human affairs. God calls all men to labor in His vineyard, and He promises to all of them an eternal reward. The voice of God is heard in the silence of every soul. This voice is heard by some of us in the beginning of the day, in the very dawn of youth. Others hear his voice at the noontime of life, and finally, it sounds for some through the lengthening shadows of life's evening. But before the close of life's day, each one must have done his share in the Lord's vineyard, for if death overtakes one who is still languishing in idleness, that one shall not receive the reward.

Quickly, therefore, Christian soul, take up thy work. Jesus calls thee today. It may be thy last invitation. The last hour of thy day may be nigh.

This enlightening parable of Jesus teaches us all a useful lesson. It is especially encouraging for those

of us who feel saddened at the thought of a past life of barren, wasted years. That we should grieve and weep is fitting, for the most fruitful years of our lives have perhaps been shrivelled up by ease and pleasure. These years are lost forever. However, we may yet trust in God. The workers who arrived at the vineyard late in the day received the same reward as the workers who arrived in the morning. The willingness with which we respond to the voice of the Master, the zeal and devotion with which we toil during the last hours of the day, can place us among the laborers who have worked since the dawn. The past, therefore, can be expiated. We are foolish if we despair.

In the epistle of the Mass today, the Church presents for our consideration the sublime words which Saint Paul addressed to the people of Corinth: "Know you not that they that run in the race, all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that you may obtain. And every one that striveth for the mastery, refraineth himself from all things: and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptable one." [1]

* * *

During this time of the year, the Church observes the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin, which occurs forty days after the feast of the Nativity. For although Mary, the Mother of God, was more pure than the rays of the sun, she wished to submit herself as did other mothers to the usual rite of purification. The ceremony took place at the

[1] I Corinthians ix, 24, 25.

door of the Temple, and after it had been performed, she entered the holy place, trembling with emotion, to offer her Child to God. The offering of the first-born male child of a family was prescribed by the Law, and the oblation of this Child had been looked for and desired down through the centuries. Mary knew this fact and knew it well. Overcoming her grief, with all her heart she made this sublime sacrifice. Then it was that Simeon making known the future to her announced that Jesus was a sign to be contradicted, told her of the agonies He would suffer, and that she, herself, incomparable mother, would become the Queen of Martyrs.

The veil of the future providentially keeps from our knowledge the sorrows which we shall encounter on our journey through life. If we foresaw them, the happiness of our lives might be diminished. The Blessed Virgin, however, had for thirty years before her mind the sword that would one day pierce her heart.

O Christian soul to whom the burden of the cross, the discomfort of an hour, seems intolerable, reflect that thy Mother at the voice of the Lord was the first to go among the briers of the vineyard, and for thy good and for thy salvation she did not refuse to labor one single moment during the long, hard, trying day.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

THE WORD OF GOD

"At that time, when a very great multitude was gathered together and hastened out of the cities unto Him, He spoke by a similitude; the sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And other some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And other some fell among thorns; and the thorns growing up with it, choked it. And other some fell upon good ground; and being sprung up, yielded fruit a hundred fold. Saying these things, He cried out, he that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And His disciples asked Him what this parable might be. To whom He said, To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to the rest in parables; that seeing they may not see, and hearing may not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. And they by the wayside are they that hear; then the devil cometh, and taketh the word out of their heart, lest believing they should be saved. Now they upon the rock are they who when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no roots, for they believe for a while, and in time of temptation they fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they who have heard, and going their way, are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit. But that on the good ground, are they who in a good and very good heart, hearing the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience. Luke viii, 4-15.

THERE is no part of the field on which the fertile seed of the sower does not fall. There is no soul that does not hear the voice of God. No sinner is so hardened, no soul is so black, that the voice of God and the light of God's grace cannot reach. On the traveled highway or the lonesome, burning desert, in the wild depths of the forest, the voice of God can be heard, and the light of grace can illumine.

Great and strong is the power of this voice. "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters," says the Psalmist, "the God of majesty hath thundered. The Lord is upon many waters. The voice of the Lord is in power; the voice of the Lord in magnificence. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord shall break the cedars of Libanus." [1]

When God speaks in His power, His enemies succumb. Saul, the persecutor, is struck from his horse on the road to Damascus, and becomes Saint Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles. Magdalene and Augustine, after many failings, bow their heads and bewail their sins.

Not always, however, does God show forth His majesty by force. Sometimes, and indeed more often, He speaks quietly to the soul by means of a gentle inspiration. The proud man does not deign to harken to this voice. He hears it, but he does not appreciate its import. There are other things which keep him busy. There are other cares and hopes which preoccupy him. He cherishes thoughts of power and influence which even if secured are but the disappearing phantoms of an hour. "O Father,

[1] Psalm xxviii, 3-5.

Lord of Heaven and earth, . . . Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them to little ones." [1]

Therefore, Christian soul, become a child when thou speakest with God. Banish the thoughts and the cares of life, exclude the voices of men, and be alone with Jesus. "O blessed solitude," exclaimed Saint Jerome, "in which God speaks to the heart with the voice of a friend."

In the evening, when the echo of the day's turmoil has subsided, meditate for a few moments on some portion of the Holy Gospel. And just as Heaven infuses a drop of dew in the corollas of flowers, so will the Lord place within thy bosom the precious pearl of His consolation.

While Elias prayed in the cave, he was inspired to climb to the summit of the mountain, for "behold the Lord passeth," [2] said a voice. A hurricane broke, uprooting the forests, but Elias did not leave the cave for the Lord does not speak in the tempest. And after the whirlwind, the rocks were shaken by an earthquake as if they would be wrenched apart, and yet the prophet did not move. The Lord does not manifest Himself in the earthquake. Shortly afterwards, the sky glowed with the color of fire, and the brightness pierced the depths of the cavern. As far as the eye could reach, the flames were raging. And Elias spoke thus within himself, "The Lord is not in the fire." [3] But when the fire was over and everything became serene and calm,

[1] Matthew xi, 25.
[2] III Kings xix, 11.
[3] III Kings xix, 12.

when he heard the murmur of a gentle breeze as light as a whisper, the prophet approached the opening of the cave, "covered his face with his mantle," [1] prostrated himself in adoration, and then God spoke to him.

Jesus passes unseen near us. His invitation is as silent and mysterious as a breath of air. Let the tempest storm without, O Christian, let the world be troubled, and let passions rage, but thou within thyself preserve thy solitude and practise recollection. The word of God will come to thee, the words of life will sound in thine ears.

[1] III Kings xix, 13.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

THE BLIND MAN OF JERICHO

"At that time, Jesus took unto Him the twelve, and said to them, Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of man: for He shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon; and after they have scourged Him, they will put Him to death; and the third day He shall rise again. And they understood none of these things, and this word was hid from them, and they understood not the things that were said. Now it came to pass, when He drew nigh to Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the wayside, begging. And when he heard the multitude passing by, he asked what this meant. And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out, saying, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. And they that went before, rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried out much more, Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus standing, commanded him to be brought unto Him: and when he was come near, He asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I do to thee? But he said, Lord, that I may see. And Jesus said to him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he saw, and followed Him, glorifying God: and all the people when they saw it, gave praise to God." Luke xviii, 31-43.

IT was the seventh day of the month of Nisan, one week before the Passion. Jesus and His disciples were passing over the great caravan highroad which extended from the Jordan up

towards the Holy City. Directly before them was the city of Jericho, the city of palms and of roses.

Not far from the gate of the city, "a certain blind man sat by the wayside, begging. And when he heard the multitude passing by, he asked what this meant. And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out, saying, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.' And they that went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried out much more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me.' And Jesus standing, commanded him to be brought unto Him. And when he was come near, He asked him, saying, 'What wilt thou that I do to thee?' But he said, 'Lord, that I may see.' "[1] It is not alms for which he begs, nor is it bread that he desires. Through the darkness which surrounds him, he has found the way to light. The blind man has found Him Who alone can assuage his long enduring grief, and the sound of the friendly voice has already soothed his troubled heart. God Himself has come to heal him and to save him. Centuries before this miracle, Isaias the prophet had proclaimed, "Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall be free."[2]

The beggar, with arms outstretched, with his uplifted eyes wandering in blindness, trembled with emotion, prostrate at the feet of Jesus. "And Jesus said to him, 'Receive thy sight, thy faith hath made thee whole.' And immediately he saw, and followed

[1]Luke xviii, 35-41.
[2]Isaias xxxv, 5, 6.

Him, glorifying God. And all the people when they saw it gave praise to God."[1] The eyes that had been lost in darkness were suddenly opened to the splendor of light. And the first look of the blind man was into the gentle loving eyes of his Saviour.

We, too, should repeat the prayer of the blind man, "Lord, that I may see."[2] The shadows of darkness are also about us.

Saint Gregory the Great tells us that we should not ask God for riches nor for honors, both of which are fleeting, but instead we should ask for light.

Today the world is plunged in darkness. Many men have left the straight and narrow pathway which leads to Heaven and happiness, and, instead, they are hastening onward to perdition. They are in the power of Satan, the enemy of light. They have abandoned eternal truth, they have spurned eternal light. They are desperately clinging to and craving for the things which are only deceptions.

We must pray for these poor, blind brothers of ours, that they may open their eyes to the light. We must also tremble for ourselves, for we are all in danger.

O Lord, Who hast heard the prayer of the blind man, harken also to our pleadings. Free Thy children from the bonds of sin! Deliver them from the powers of darkness, and bring them to the enjoyment of the light and glory of Heaven.

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[1]Luke xviii, 42 43.
[2]Luke xviii, 41.

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

STATION IN THE CHURCH OF SAINT JOHN LATERAN

Following the example of Jesus, Who for forty days fasted in the desert, the Church has instituted forty days of penance, in order to prepare the faithful for the festival of Easter, on which day they should rise to a holy life with the triumphant Saviour. The season of Lent, until recent centuries, was considered as a "Truce of God." During this time, all Christian peoples devoted themselves to the practice of mortification and to religious instruction. The Pope, accompanied by the clergy and the laity, visited a different Church each day during Lent. These Churches were known as "Stations," or centres of devotion for particular days. The Church begins this holy season by putting ashes on the foreheads of her children, and inviting them to meditate on death.

PENANCE

"At that time, Jesus said to His disciples, When you fast, be not as the hypocrites, sad. For they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head and wash thy face; that thou appear not to men to fast, but to thy Father Who is in secret, and thy Father, who seeth in secret, will repay thee. Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth, where the rust and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up to yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither the rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also." Matthew vi, 16-21. (Gospel in the Mass of Ash Wednesday.)

AT the beginning of Lent, the Church advises and exhorts each of her children, saying: "Let not your penance be vain and external, as that of the Pharisees, but let it rather be inspired by a deep and sincere grief for your offences; do not seek to obtain the praise of men, but rather the pardon of God. Remember the words of the prophet, 'Now, therefore, saith the Lord: Be converted to Me with all your heart, in fasting and in weeping and in mourning. And rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God; for He is gracious and merciful. . . . Blow the trumpet in Sion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather together the people, sanctify the Church, assemble the ancients, gather together the little ones. . . . Between the porch and the altar, the priests, the Lord's ministers, shall weep and shall say: Spare, O Lord, spare Thy people.' " [1]

All during the year the Christian must take up his cross and follow Jesus, but during this time, the practice of mortification becomes collective. It is the whole Church which unites in penance and in prayer. The words and the symbols of the liturgy speak of nothing else. She clothes herself with the colors of humility; she subdued the sound of the organ; she prolongs her psalmody; her very chants seem grief-laden. Daily pilgrimages are made by the faithful to the ancient basilicas which contain the tombs of the martyrs. In private life, frugality at table is practised; worldly amusements, marriage solemnities and theatres are piously avoided, because

[1] Joel ii, 12-17.

these are the days of the soul, the acceptable time for repentance and salvation.

"If your sin is great," says Saint Ambrose, "if it seems to you impossible to wash it away with your tears, let the Church, your mother, weep for you, and so peace will again be yours. Return, therefore, to her feet, partake of her sacraments, and in contrition pray and weep with her."

Do not delay, for life is short. The priest who has signed you with ashes has told you in the name of God, "Remember, man, that thou art dust, and into dust thou shalt return." And he meant,—set not your heart on the vain things of this world, because death quickly comes and snatches them away. Endeavor, rather, to store up in Heaven a treasure of merit for the life which shall never end. In Heaven, therefore, are your true blessings. There let your heart be also.

* * *

One of the most noted examples of repentance is given to us by Saint Augustine. Opening his eyes on the vanities of the world at the age of thirty, he consecrated the remainder of his life to God's glory, in grief for his own sins. This penance lasted for forty-six years. In his last illness, feeling his strength ebbing away, he asked for his favorite prayer book, the Penitential Psalms. Propping them up on his bed against the wall, he continually held them in front of him, reading and meditating on them with great abundance of tears up to the moment of death. He has left us two counsels, which, after fifteen centuries, still thrill us. The

first is the following: "There is no age in man that does not hurry toward the end. The years that come are not added, but subtracted." The other is that which he frequently repeated to his friends: "No Christian, even though he be a saint, should leave this world without having performed worthy penance."

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

STATION IN THE CHURCH OF SAINT MARY IN DOMNICA

THE PRODIGAL SON

"At that time, Jesus spoke to the Pharisees and scribes this parable: a certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of substance that falleth to me: and he divided unto them his substance. And not many days after, the younger son gathering all together, went abroad into a far country, and there wasted his substance, living riotously. And after he had spent all, there came a mighty famine in that country, and he began to be in want; and he went, and cleaved to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his farm to feed swine; and he would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him. And returning to himself, he said, How many hired servants in my father's house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger? I will arise, and will go to my father, and say to him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee: I am not now worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants. And rising up, he came to his father: and when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and running to him fell upon his neck and kissed him; and the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, I am not now worthy to be called thy son. And the father said to his servants, Bring forth quickly the first

robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and make merry: because this my son was dead, and is come to life again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came, and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing: and he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe. And he was angry, and would not go in. His father therefore coming out, began to entreat him: and he answering, said to his father, Behold, for so many years do I serve thee, and I have never transgressed thy commandment, and yet thou hast never given me a kid to make merry with my friends. But as soon as this thy son is come, who hath devoured his substance with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. But he said to him, Son, thou art always with me, and all I have is thine; but it was fit that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead, and is come to life again; he was lost, and is found." Luke xv, 11-32. (Gospel in the Mass of Saturday in the second week of Lent.)

IN this parable is the history of all conversions, and, perhaps, our own history.

God would have been able to take away His gifts, so many times abused by us,—to take away the light from our eyes, to take even our life, in order to prevent us from offending Him; but still He has allowed us to live on. We have perhaps wandered far from home, deluded by a foolish dream, and quickly that most rapacious of tyrants, the devil, has become our master. We have thus lost peace and happiness, the true riches of the soul, and

once in the power of the evil one, we are treated with scorn and contempt.

And then, in the depths of our hearts is born a great remorse. The thought of our lost happiness is before us, the pleasant memory of our Father's home. Invitations to return torture our hearts. "Father," we say to Him, "we have sinned. We are no longer worthy to be called Thy sons. Receive us as Thy hired servants. We wish to be with Thee!"

And we begin our journey back. O blessed footsteps towards the house of God! With every one, the heart thrills and exults with joy.

Who can describe the emotion of the sinner when he enters once more into the Church of his early years, the refuge of peace? Jesus, his Lord, comes with open arms to meet him, and the prodigal, worn and weakened, in one supreme burst of repentance, throws himself into those arms. "Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee; I am no longer worthy of the name of son." A lump rises in his throat, and he bursts into tears. These are the sublime moments of conversion. The tears of the son mingle with the tears of the Father in one and the same grief. "How often have I grieved," exclaimed the converted Augustine, "how often have I wept, O Lord, in Thy house, deeply moved by the voices of Thy Church! More happy is one lone instant with Thee than a thousand days in the companionship of sinners."

* * *

A celebrated preacher, speaking to a congregation of men, thus concluded his discourse: "I ask

you this night to pass one moment in silence and reflection." Jesus makes the same request of us. If there is any one who is still far from home, bound by the chains of the tyrant, let that one know that this parable of love, of tenderness and of pardon, is intended for him.

God came down from Heaven not to seek the just, but sinners. Return, O son, to His arms! Break the last fetters and return. You will become the object of all His solicitude,—yes, and of all His affection, and there will be more joy in Heaven at your return than for ninety-nine just who need not penance.

FEAST OF ST. JOSEPH

"At that time, an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: Arise, and take the child and His mother, and fly into Egypt; and be there until I tell thee: for it will come to pass that Herod will seek the child to destroy Him. Who arose, and took the child and His mother by night, and retired into Egypt; and He was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the prophet, saying: Out of Egypt have I called My Son." Matthew ii, 13-15.

FROM this short narrative, we all understand how necessary it was to the Mother of God, a simple virgin of Galilee, to have the guardianship of a man. God, Who had chosen her in preference to all creatures, Who had filled her with grace, preserving her from original sin and blessing her among all women, wished that she should have for her defence and for her comfort in the perilous hours of persecution, in the straits of pov-

erty and of exile, not angels from Heaven, not the great and powerful of the earth, but a poor, humble workman of Nazareth by the name of Joseph. The Gospel, which is the voice of God, has revealed to us in one word the sublime sanctity of this man by calling him "just." And, certainly, only to a saint of consummate perfection could God entrust the most precious treasures that He had on earth, the Virgin of Virgins and the Infant Jesus. Magnificent are the praises of the liturgy. "The Lord God of your fathers will come to aid you. The Omnipotent One will bless you with the blessings of Heaven and earth."

Joseph is the head of the little family. He is the one who receives the message from the angel to go into Egypt. He takes the Infant in his arms and presses Him to his bosom. And with Mary, the best, the sweetest, and the most sorrowful of mothers, he begins his journey into exile.

In every path lurks, perhaps, the enemy in ambush; over every step falls the shadow of death. In the distance the hurricane is raging. Herod, the fierce tyrant, fearing that a pretender to his throne has been born, has ordered the slaughter of all male children in Bethlehem under two years of age. The mothers, stricken to the heart, cry and wail, but in vain. The prophet Jeremias had already predicted this inconsolable mourning, when every crib would be stained with the blood of the most innocent. One child, alone, escaped the sword, the One who, under the protection of Joseph, is being brought into Egypt, the One who is the True King, the Son of David, the Son of the

Most High. God has reserved for Him a more sublime sacrifice.

When we are burdened with grief and tortured with the anguish of this vale of tears, when we suffer from the persecution of the wicked who cannot bear the reproof of our virtues, we should call to our minds the figure of Joseph, grief-stricken and tormented Joseph, persecuted through Jesus and through Mary. We shall be guided and consoled by this example; we shall be encouraged and inspired by his devotion.

Only the one who loves God and has his heart centered on eternal good understands the supreme comfort of resignation and the sweetness of suffering. "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy," proclaims Jesus, "and your joy no man shall take from you." [1] With these words, Jesus has dried all our tears.

* * *

Saint Teresa, a most fervent soul, was extremely devoted to the holy patriarch. "I do not know," she was accustomed to repeat, "how it is possible to think of the Queen of Angels, so fatigued during the infancy of Jesus, without thanking Saint Joseph for all the assistance that he gave during that time to the mother and the Son." "And," she added, "if I tell you the spiritual and temporal favors I have received from God through his intercession, it would make you marvel. I have never known anyone who professed special devotion to him who did not make visible progress towards perfection every day. For

[1] John xvi, 20, 22.

many years, on his feast day, I asked him a favor, and my prayer was always answered."

The great Pope Pious IX declared Saint Joseph the patron of the universal Church, and under his paternal guidance the Church will find, as did the Infant Jesus, refuge and protection in persecution.

Every pious soul that fears the last battle may with great confidence have recourse to Saint Joseph to obtain the grace of a happy death through his intercession, to die like Saint Joseph, in the arms of Jesus and Mary.

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

STATION IN THE CHURCH OF SAINT LAWRENCE OUTSIDE THE WALLS OF ROME

THE ANNUNCIATION

"At that time the angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women. Who having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said to her, Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father; and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever. And of His kingdom there shall be no end. And Mary said to the angel, How shall this be done, because I know not man? And the angel answering said to her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren: because no word shall be impossible with God. And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word." Luke i,

26-38. (Gospel in the Mass of the Feast of the Annunciation, March 25th.)

THE angel of the Lord did not appear to the powerful rulers of Rome, nor to the wise philosophers of Greece, but to a simple virgin, of whom all the world was ignorant. Humble and sincere, her heart absorbed in the ecstasy of prayer, she is the most holy creature of God. The inspired greeting with which the angel hailed her in the name of the Lord has been the wonder of the world. From the unhappy day of the first sin, every son of Adam comes into the world with the stain of sin on his soul, under the weight of condemnation, a slave of the devil. Mary, alone, was preserved from this sentence,—"Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women." The angel, who for the first time thus invoked her, knew the reason for such greetings. Mary is to be the mother of the Saviour, the mother of God. And yet, the Blessed Virgin does not rejoice. At the unusual salutation, she becomes thoughtful and does not answer. Then, when the announcement of the sublime dignity has sounded in the heavens, she bows her head, and calls herself the handmaid of the Lord. At that moment, Mary became associated by God with the work of the redemption as the mother of Jesus, and, therefore, as the refuge of all sinners. Was there ever a soul, no matter how derelict, who, having recourse to her was not consoled?

Every Christian, from his earliest years, knows the loving invocation that we call the "Hail Mary."

We, therefore, must tell those who do not pray how much sweetness there is in that prayer. It is the invocation which Heaven began and which the Church has happily finished,—"Holy Mary, Mother of God!" Is it possible for the Son not to be heard by the mother? Pray, therefore, O Mother of God, for us sinners, now, without any limit of time, in all moments of this continuous battle, and more especially in the hour of our death.

* * *

A non-Catholic child six years of age, who had learned the "Hail Mary" from his small Catholic companions, repeated it to his mother. She was very angry with him and forbade him to say it again. A few years later, he opened by chance the Gospel of Saint Luke, and was much surprised to find in the Book of Truth the Catholic's prayer spoken by an angel. When he was thirteen, he read the "Magnificat" in the same Gospel and was very much impressed with the words of the Virgin, "all generations shall call me blessed." [1] He asked his mother why, therefore, non-Catholics refused to call Mary "blessed," and she was unable to answer.

Thus, truth made progress in his heart. When he became of age, he was converted to the Catholic Church, and was ordained a priest. His name was Father Tuchelf, the chaplain of the Church of Our Lady of Victory in Paris, in the second half of the last century. He himself told the story of his conversion at the Catholic Congress of Lille. The

[1] Luke i, 48.

"Hail Mary" was for him the first link in that sweet chain of graces which brought him to God.

Three times in the day,—in the morning, at noontime, and in the evening,—the church bells ring. They sound in our ears as the voices of angels softening our mortal trials. All the Catholic world at that time recites the "Angelus." No one should remain deaf to the invitation; no one should forget to pray.

"Remember, son," said Saint Bonaventure, "that the Virgin invariably answers you with a favor when you greet her with a 'Hail Mary.' "

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

STATION IN THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY CROSS IN JERUSALEM

THE RICH MAN

"At that time, Jesus said to Pharisees, There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasted sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, who lay at his gate full of sores; desiring to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table: and no one did give him: moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. And the rich man also died, and he was buried in hell. And lifting up his eyes, when he was in torments, he saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. And Abraham said to him, Son, remember that thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is fixed a great chaos: so that they who would pass from hence to you, cannot, nor from thence come hither. And he said; Then, father, I beseech thee that thou wouldst send him to my father's house, for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torments. And Abraham said to him, They have Moses and the prophets: let them hear

them. But he said, No, father Abraham, but if one shall go to them from the dead, they will do penance. And he said to him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe if one rose again from the dead." Luke xvi, 19-31. (Gospel in the Mass of Thursday in the second week of Lent.)

IN this parable, the Saviour has revealed the folly of the maxims of the world in the light of eternity. Men admire and envy the rich lord who is surrounded by affluence, who passes his youth in dissipation with his friends, tasting of every pleasure, smothering by his indulgence the voice of conscience. The poor beggar knocks at his door in the name of God, asking for the crumbs that fall from his table. He is coldly refused and driven away, when even the dogs have pity on him. What person of the world would consider the beggar more happy than the one who spurned him? But Jesus has said, "Woe to you that are rich; for you have your consolation." [1] "Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." [2] Was it possible to overturn more completely worldly ideals?

The happiness of the world is a snare. "You know the theatre," said Saint John Chrysostum, "and among the players you see one who takes the part of a philosopher, another that of a doctor, a third the rôle of a king. In the illusion of the moment, you think only of appearances and enjoy the performance, but when the curtain falls and the comedy is over, all the players take off their costumes and en-

[1] Luke vi, 24.
[2] Luke vi, 20.

ter once more into real life. The king, the doctor and the philosopher go back to selling grapes and figs. And so it is with the rich man in this world. Do not regard him as really rich; do not consider him truly happy. He has only the mask of riches and of happiness. When the curtain falls, and death comes, he is despoiled of everything, even to the last penny, the last thread of purple leaving him only with the works that he has done. The sentence which God pronounces on him will never end. Will the rich man, condemned, be able to rise from the deep abyss where he is lying, to ascend above, where reign the poor of Christ? No, never. He who denied the starving Lazarus a crumb of bread can never obtain a drop of water in the fire that now devours him."

Therefore, O Christian, in those things that you are wont to call the injustices of life, where the bad rejoice and the good suffer, do not stop at appearances, but raise your thoughts to eternity. The maxims of the world are lies. The word of God is truth. Have faith. While you suffer with resignation the poverty and the trials of these short days, you are already enriching yourself with the wealth and happiness that are real, because yours is the kingdom of Heaven.

Another reason for consolation is this: the Calvary which you are mounting has been made easy by the suffering of the Saviour. No cross will ever be as heavy as that which He carried for love of us.

This example of Jesus so moved Saint Francis of Assisi that he wished for love of Christ to give up every possession to wed himself as he said, "to

sister Poverty." He loved suffering as the world loves pleasures. The author of "The Little Flowers" has expressed this sentiment in a remarkable way. One day, Brother Leo asked Saint Francis, "Father, I pray you, from the viewpoint of God tell me where is perfect happiness." And Saint Francis answered, "When we return home, drenched by the rain, trembling with cold, and suffering from hunger, and when we knock at the door and the porter angrily tells us, 'Go away, you are two thieves,' and so makes us remain outside in the snow and water, cold and hungry, then if we bear all these rebuffs patiently and with joy, thinking of the sufferings of the Blessed Saviour, and if we endure these trials for love of Him, then, O Brother Leo, write down that here, and in this, is perfect happiness."

PASSION SUNDAY

STATION IN THE CHURCH OF SAINT PETER IN THE VATICAN

Yesterday evening, the Church mournfully veiled the images of Christ and the saints, in memory of the fact that the Saviour hid Himself from the Jews who came to stone Him, and went out of the temple. And with the passing of the Master's glory, that of the disciples is also eclipsed. The ceremonies of these days prepare for Holy Week, because they are accompanied with solemn rites expressive of the highest mysteries of the Redemption.

JESUS HIDES HIMSELF

"At that time, Jesus said to the multitudes of the Jews, Which of you shall convince Me of sin? If I say the truth to you, why do you not believe Me? He that is of God, heareth the words of God. Therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God. The Jews therefore answered and said to Him, Do not we say well, that Thou art a Samaritan (a heretic), and hast a devil? Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honor My father, and you have dishonored Me. But I seek not My own glory; there is one that seeketh and judgeth. Amen, amen, I say to you, If any man keep My word, he shall not see death for ever. The Jews therefore said, Now we know that Thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and Thou sayest, If any man keep My word, he shall not taste death for ever. Art Thou greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? and the prophets are dead. Whom dost Thou make Thyself? Jesus answered, If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing (to you). It is My Father that glori-

fieth Me, of Whom you say that He is your God. And you have not known Him; but I know Him. And if I shall say that I know Him not, I shall be like to you, a liar. But I do know Him, and do keep His word. Abraham your father rejoiced that he might see My day: he saw it, and was glad. The Jews therefore said to Him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham? Jesus said to them, Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham was made, I am. They took up stones therefore to cast at Him; but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple." John viii, 46-59.

IN this dialogue, the struggle between light and darkness, between good and evil, is vividly described. This struggle rages in the silence of every soul. The voice of conscience asks compliance with God's law; the voice of passion storms against it. How many are the subtle deceits of the tempter to ensnare us in his net and draw us away from duty! If we have not strength to oppose resolutely the first advances of the enemy, we shall fall gradually into more serious errors. And it is possible for us to fall so far as even to hate good and spurn God.

This darkening of the intellect is the most terrible punishment which can possibly befall a sinner. It is this punishment which the Gospel has expressed with one single phrase: "Jesus hid Himself."

On the occasion of the first sin, there is remorse, serious sometimes, and harrowing, capable of embittering an existence. This remorse which is the first punishment of the sinner, is also a ray of light, a beginning for rising again. But when the bonds of sin grow more heavy, when the sin becomes a

habit, the voice of Jesus becomes stifled, the conscience sleeps, and the sinner is at ease in his sin. Having reached the bottom of the abyss, sacred Scripture tells us that he scorns good, and thus the sinner continues smiling to the meeting with Death. There can be no blindness more terrifying than this. Do not say, therefore, O sinful man, "I have sinned, and no evil has come to me." Know that God is slow in retribution. For each one He has established a period of toleration, beyond which He withdraws His mercy, and substitutes justice in its place. When the tempter tells you, therefore, that you will repent tomorrow, ask him with Saint Augustine, "If tomorrow, why not today?" Jesus today is passing; tomorrow, possibly, He may not return; and if He does not return! It is folly to throw yourself into a well hoping that a rescuer will come. It is absurd to take poison on the pretext that there is an antidote.

In the fifth chapter of the prophecy of Daniel, there is a dramatic narration of the punishment with which God surprised a sinner sleeping in his sins. King Baltasar, one of the persecutors of the true religion, gave a wondrous banquet to a thousand of his nobles. Being already drunk with wine, he ordered that the precious chalices of gold and silver stolen from the Temple of Jerusalem should be brought into the hall that they might drink toasts to his idols. At that very moment there appeared a mysterious figure, as of a man's hand, writing upon the wall of the royal chamber. The king saw it and grew pale. His knees trembled, his heart grew cold with terror. He

summoned Daniel, and asked him to explain the meaning of the writing, promising him great gifts in reward. And the prophet made this answer: "Thy rewards be to thyself, and the gifts of thy house give to another: but the writing I will read to thee, O king, and show thee the interpretation thereof. O king, the most high God gave to Nabuchodonosar, thy father, a kingdom, and greatness and glory and honor. But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit hardened unto pride, he was put down from the throne of his kingdom, and his glory was taken away. Thou also his son, O Baltasar, hast not humbled thy heart, whereas thou knewest all these things; but hast lifted thyself up against the Lord of Heaven . . . and the God Who hath thy breath in His hand. And this is the writing that is written: 'God hath numbered thy kingdom, and hath finished it' . . . 'thou art weighed in the balance and art found wanting;' . . . 'thy kingdom is divided and is given to the Medes and Persians.' " [1]

The sacred book adds this terse note: "The same night, Baltasar, the Chaldean king, was slain." [2]

[1]Daniel v, 17-28.
[2]Daniel v, 30.

HOLY WEEK

PALM SUNDAY

STATION IN THE CHURCH OF SAINT JOHN LATERAN

The triumphal entrance of the gentle King into Jerusalem is commemorated today. Processions take place in all the churches. Joyful hosannas are sung, and branches of blessed palm are carried in the hands of the participants as a sign of their faith in Christ, and as a harbinger of His future glory. The door of the church opens at the touch of the processional cross, signifying that to the Church militant, as to the victorious Christ, are opened by virtue of the cross the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem. During the Mass, the dramatic story of the sufferings and death of the Saviour is read to the assembled faithful. This part of the gospel is known as the "Passion," and in solemn Masses it is sung by three deacons, taking the part of the narrator, Christ and the synagogue.

HOLY THURSDAY

STATION IN THE CHURCH OF SAINT JOHN LATERAN

The white color of the vestments, the "Gloria" in the Mass, the notes of the organ, and the sound of the bells, indicate a parenthesis of joy in this sorrowful week. The Church commemorates the institution of the Blessed Sacrament, and in honor of this feast day all the faithful children of the Church should receive Holy Communion.

After the singing of the "Gloria in Excelsis," the bells are not sounded until the Mass on Saturday. There is a note of sorrow throughout all the liturgy. The kiss of peace is not given, because Jesus was betrayed by a kiss.

In the cathedral churches, the bishops bless the oil of the sick,

the oil of the catechumens and chrism. After the Mass, the Sacred Host is borne in procession to an altar resplendent with lights. This altar of exposition is improperly called the "sepulchre." The other altars are entirely stripped, in token of desolation.

GOOD FRIDAY

STATION IN THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY CROSS IN JERUSALEM

The Church is in mourning. After the reading of the prophecies and the singing of the Passion, the priest, in the name of the Church, prays for all, even the Church's enemies. At the singing of the "Improperia," or paternal reproaches of the Saviour to the ungrateful people, the adoration of the cross takes place. At the end of this ceremony, the celebrant consumes the Host, consecrated the day before. Because of this previous consecration, the Mass is called the Mass of the Presanctified.

HOLY SATURDAY

STATION IN THE CHURCH OF SAINT JOHN LATERAN

New fire kindled from flint is blessed outside of the church. The spark which flashes out represents Christ emerging from the sepulchre of rock outside of the walls of Jerusalem. Incense is also blessed, symbolizing the sweet spices sprinkled on the body of the Saviour. The triple candle represents the Trinity, and the paschal candle, lighted and adorned with five grains of blessed incense in the form of a cross, is an image of the Risen Christ with His glorious wounds. The deacon proclaims the Resurrection in the marvelous chant of the "Exultet." At the baptistery the celebrant blesses the water for the sacrament of baptism, for the spiritual rebirth which is a fruit of the Resurrection. Following this ceremony, the Church advocates the blessing of homes, invoking on those dwelling therein the peace of Easter.

THE PASSION

"Pilate therefore went into the hall again, and called Jesus, and said to Him, Art Thou the King of the Jews?

Jesus answered, sayest thou this thing of thyself, or have others told it thee of Me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thy own nation and the chief priests have delivered Thee up to me; what hast Thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would certainly strive that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from hence. Pilate therefore said to Him, Art thou a King then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest, that I am a King. For this was I born, and for this came I into the world; that I should give testimony to the truth. Every one that is of the truth, heareth My voice. Pilate saith to Him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and saith to them, I find no cause in Him. But you have a custom that I should release one unto you at the pasch: will you therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews? Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber. Then therefore Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him. And the soldiers platting a crown of thorns, put it upon His head; and they put on Him a purple garment. And they came to Him, and said, Hail, King of the Jews: and they gave Him blows. Pilate therefore went forth again, and said to them, Behold, I bring Him forth unto you, that you may know that I find no cause in Him. (Jesus therefore came forth, bearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment.) And he saith to them, Behold the Man. When the chief priests therefore and the servants had seen Him, they cried out, saying, Crucify Him, crucify Him. Pilate saith to them, Take Him you, and crucify Him; for I find no cause in Him. The Jews answered him, We have a law, and according to the law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God. When Pilate therefore had heard this saying, he feared the more. And he entered into the hall again, and he said to Jesus, Whence art Thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate therefore saith to Him,

Speakest Thou not to me? Knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and I have power to release Thee? Jesus answered, Thou shouldst not have any power against Me, unless it were given thee from above. Therefore he that hath delivered Me to thee, hath the greater sin. And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release Him. But the Jews cried out, saying, If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend. For whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar. Now when Pilate had heard these words, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment-seat, in the place that is called Lithostrotus; and in Hebrew, Gabbatha. And it was the parasceve of the pasch, about the sixth hour: and He saith to the Jews, Behold your King. But they cried out, Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him. Pilate saith to them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Cæsar. Then therefore he delivered Him to them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led Him forth; and bearing His own cross, He went forth to that place which is called Calvary, but in Hebrew Golgotha: where they crucified Him, and with Him two others, one on each side, and Jesus in the midst. And Pilate wrote a title also, and he put it upon the cross: and the writing was, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. This title therefore many of the Jews did read, because the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, in Greek, and in Latin. Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, Write not the King of the Jews, but that He said, I am the King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written. Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Him, took His garments (and they made four parts, to every soldier a part), and also His coat. Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said then one to another, Let us not cut it, but let us cast lots for it, whose it shall be; that the Scripture might be fulfilled which saith, They have parted My garments among them, and upon My ves-

ture they have cast lots. And the soldiers indeed did these things. Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, His mother, and His mother's sister Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing whom He loved, He saith to His mother, Woman, behold thy son. After that, He saith to the disciple, Behold thy mother. And from that hour the disciple took her to his own. Afterwards, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst. Now there was a vessel set there full of vinegar: and they put a sponge full of vinegar about hyssop, and put it to His mouth. When Jesus therefore had taken the vinegar, He said, It is consummated. And bowing His head He gave up the ghost." John xviii, 33—xix, 30.

DURING these days, two great thoughts must be uppermost in our minds and deeply engraved in our hearts,—the crucified Jesus, and the desolate Mary. We are the cause of their great affliction. Let us meditate on this responsibility, and in the midst of our reflections the sublime prayer of the Stabat Mater will gently impress itself on our souls. "Near the cross, O Mother, I wish to stand with thee. Together with thee, make me weep also."

EASTER SUNDAY

STATION IN THE CHURCH OF SAINT MARY MAJOR

Easter is the greatest feast of the year. The Church in the wondrous liturgy of this season greets with joy the risen Saviour, "Alleluia," she proclaims, "Praise be to the Lord."

And the glory of Christ is also the glory of Mary. The Church exults with her, repeating the prayer, "Queen of Heaven, rejoice!" This prayer takes the place of the "Angelus" during the season of Easter.

Every Catholic is obliged to receive Holy Communion at this time of the year.

THE RESURRECTION

"At that time, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Salome bought sweet spices, that coming they might anoint Jesus. And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they come to the sepulchre, the sun being now risen; and they said one to another, Who shall roll back the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And looking, they saw the stone rolled back: for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed with a white robe, and they were astonished: who saith to them, Be not affrighted; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, Who was crucified: He is risen, He is not here; behold the place where they laid Him: but go, tell His disciples, and Peter, that He goeth before you into Galilee: there you shall see Him, as He told you." Mark xvi, 1-7.

THE Jews, after having nailed the Saviour to the cross, flung at Him this taunting challenge, "If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." [1] And mocking Him they

[1]Matthew xxvii, 40.

said, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." [1] It would seem that divine omnipotence thus defied should vindicate itself by a miracle. And, certainly, it would not have been difficult for the Son of God triumphantly to break the instruments of His martyrdom and thwart the anger of His enemies, to come down victorious from the cross. All the love which He bore for mankind, however, His supreme desire to redeem the human race by His blood and by His death, bound Him to the cross more strongly than did the nails of His persecutors. With His arms stretched out in one last embrace of love and pardon, Jesus completed the sacrifice and died transfixed on the cross.

The Jews deluded themselves with the idea that they had buried His name beneath a mass of opprobrium and ignominy. Was it possible for them, however, to be deceived? We shall see.

It is the dawn of the third day. The Divine Body of the Saviour, wrapped in funeral bandages, is resting in a tomb carved from the solid rock. The silent warriors stand on guard before it. On the white stone that closes the entrance to the sepulchre may be seen the huge seal of the Sanhedrin. No one, surely, will attempt to steal the lifeless body of the Nazarene.

But, behold! the earth trembles. An angel of God appears, brilliant and dazzling as a flash of lightning, the watchmen flee in terror,—Jesus Christ is risen from the dead!

This is the day of His great victory. He did not come down, still living from the cross as the Jews

[1] Matthew xxvii, 42.

had defied Him to do, but He did something far more astounding—He came, living, from actual death.

There are two great evils,—sin and death. They entered into the world through the fall of our first parents. Jesus has conquered both of them. Dying, He has vanquished sin. Risen, He has overcome death. "O Death," he exclaims in His triumph, "I am your death! O Hell, I am your torment!" And the Church, brilliant with the glory of His splendor, answers in jubilation, "Alleluia! Glory to the King of Life, Who returns living from the struggle with Death! Glory to the Conquering King!"

If you wish, Christian soul, to take part in the triumph of your Saviour, you, also, must conquer sin in the sacrament of penance, and rise in grace. True good is not on earth but in Heaven, where Christ reigns at the right hand of His father. Thus also will you conquer death.

Eutyches, patriarch of Constantinople, on his bed of pain, holding the skin of his withered hand, and radiant with hope, exclaimed to Saint Gregory the Great, "I confess that I shall rise in this flesh." You, also, should make such an act of faith. It is necessary that your body should lose the bloom of youth, grow old, and turn into dust. But if Christ has risen, you also will rise. "Behold, I tell you a mystery," says Saint Paul. "We shall all indeed rise again; . . . for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise again incorruptible." [1] And the Apostle concludes, "Thanks be to God, Who hath

[1] I Corinthians xv, 51, 52.

given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast and unmoveable; always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain." [1]

[1] I Corinthians xv, 57, 58.

LOW SUNDAY OR SUNDAY IN WHITE

STATION IN THE CHURCH OF SAINT PANCRATIUS

On the first Sunday after Easter, the newly converted Christians took off the white garments with which they had been clothed for the reception of baptism on Holy Saturday. Because of this custom, the day is called "Sunday in White." The present ceremony of placing a white cloth on the head of baptized persons recalls this primitive rite. With the pouring of the regenerating waters, the soul assumes the garment of innocence, which is to be carried unstained before the tribunal of Jesus Christ.

FAITH

"At that time, when it was late that same day, the first of the week, and the doors were shut, where the disciples were gathered together, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came, and stood in the midst and said to them, Peace be to you. And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. The disciples therefore were glad, when they saw the Lord. He said therefore to them again, Peace be to you: as the Father hath sent Me, I also send you. When He had said this, He breathed on them; and He said to them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained. Now, Thomas, one of the twelve, who is called Didymus, was not with them, when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, We have seen the Lord. But he said to them: Except I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe. And after eight days, again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the

midst, and said, Peace be to you. Then He said to Thomas, Put in thy finger hither, and see My hands, and bring hither thy hand and put it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing. Thomas answered, and said to Him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith to him, Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed. Many other signs also did Jesus in the sight of His disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God; and that, believing, you may have life in His name." John xx, 19-31.

JESUS had appeared to the Apostles. He had shown them the trace of the nails in His hands, and the wound of the lance in His heart. He had given them their mission to announce the Gospel to all nations; He had breathed upon them, giving them power to forgive sins. It seems incredible that there should have been a doubt about the fact that Christ had risen, a fact that was substantiated by so many witnesses. But Thomas, who was absent when Jesus appeared, would not believe the other Apostles. He considered it a mere hallucination, and shaking his head, he repeated the words of all subsequent unbelievers, "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, . . . and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." [1] For eight days he persisted in his obstinacy. It is the octave of Easter, and the Apostles are once more together. Jesus comes again. He has come for Thomas to convince him,—to take him at his word. "Put in thy finger hither, and see My hands; and bring hither thy hand and put it into My side and be not faith-

[1] John xx, 25.

less but believing." [1] But Thomas is now convinced. He utters that sublime profession of faith which is the cry of every soul that returns, "My Lord and my God!" And in one repentant outburst of devotion, he falls in tears at Jesus' feet.

"The unbelief of Thomas," says Saint Gregory the Great, "has helped our faith more than the docility of all the other Apostles. The difficulties and doubts of this Apostle, and his obstinacy, are for us a guaranty of the truth."

The entire preaching of the Apostles is based on this fact,—that Christ is risen from the dead. To prove the truth of His resurrection, they fearlessly faced death. Their martyrdom is for us the most absolute proof of their unshakable conviction and of their veracity.

* * *

Some years after the resurrection, a company of soldiers was riding towards the city of Damascus. The leader of this company was a man by the name of Saul. He was commissioned by the Jews of Jerusalem to capture the disciples of the Lord. Suddenly, a light from Heaven shone around him, and terrified he fell from his horse. "Saul, Saul," cried the voice, "Why persecutest thou Me?" [2] And Saul, trembling with fear asked, "Who art Thou, Lord?" "I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest," [3] was the answer, and Saul was converted to the true faith. He entered the city, offered himself for instruction in the Christian religion and received the sacrament

[1] John xx, 27.
[2] Acts ix, 4.
[3] Acts ix, 5.

of baptism. Such is the story of the Apostle of the Gentiles, Saint Paul, one of the greatest souls of the Christian Church. Writing later a celebrated letter to the faithful of Corinth, he enumerated the arguments on account of which he believed. "Christ . . . rose again the third day according to the Scriptures and was seen by Peter, and after that by the eleven. Then He was seen by more than five hundred brethren at once, of whom many remain until this present. . . . After that, he was seen by James, then by all the Apostles. And last of all, He was seen also by me, . . . the least of the Apostles, who am not worthy to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God." [1]

The bitter enemy of Christ had become the most intrepid of His Apostles. He traveled through the Roman Empire, confronting everywhere the enemies of the truth, bravely enduring tortures and hardships, and finally obtaining the martyr's crown.

You, too, O Christian soul, must be unflinchingly steadfast in your faith. "When you hear the unbeliever insult our faith," says Saint Augustine, "raise your forehead and defend it. Your forehead is signed and confirmed with the cross of Christ from the day on which you became His soldier."

[1] I Corinthians xv, 3-9.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

"At that time, Jesus said to the Pharisees, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth His life for His sheep; but the hireling, and he that is not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and flieth; and the wolf catcheth and scattereth the sheep; and the hireling flieth because he is a hireling, and he hath no care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know Mine and Mine know Me. As the Father knoweth Me, and I know the Father, and I lay down My life for My sheep. And other sheep I have, that are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." John x, 11-16.

Jesus is the Shepherd, and the faithful, who have been baptized in His name and have had His indelible character impressed on their soul, are the sheep. Who has not observed what happens in the sheepfold? The shepherd lives with the sheep, knows each of them, calls them by name. Whenever he moves, the whole flock follows. And if a stranger appears among them, the sheep take fright and scamper away. But Jesus is not only a Shepherd, He is the Good Shepherd.

Men who take care of sheep watch the flock for love of gain, and as soon as the proper season comes, they shear the sheep and sacrifice the lambs. Jesus, instead, loves His sheep. He has given His blood

for them, and has sacrificed Himself to defend them. "I give them life everlasting and they shall not perish forever, and no man shall pluck them out of My hand." [1]

When a sheep is lost, the Good Shepherd has peace no longer. He leaves the rest of the fold and goes in search of the one that is lost. Over the rocks, in the brushwood, on the hills, into the ravines, He goes and calls for the sheep to return.

Harken, O wandering, desolate sheep, harken to the voice of the Shepherd. O, if you knew how Jesus wishes you to return! "I have wandered," wept Saint Ambrose, "I have wandered as a sheep that is lost." Come, O Lord, and rescue Thy poor tired sheep. Come, O Shepherd, leave the other ninety-nine of the flock, and hasten after me who am lost. Come without the shepherd dogs, and without the staff. Save me from the ravening wolves that are around me. Take me on Thy shoulders and carry me; yes, carry me to the cross. The cross is my comfort and my refuge,—it is the rest of my weary soul. It is my life, even though I be dead.

* * *

The time approached when Jesus was to leave the earth and return to His Father. He called Saint Peter to Him and asked him three times, "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these?" Saint Peter answered, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." And Jesus said, "Feed My sheep." [2] Saint Peter, therefore,

[1] John x, 28.
[2] John xxi, 15-17.

was constituted the visible shepherd of the Church in place of Jesus. From the death of Saint Peter, with a never interrupted succession, the vicar of Christ takes the place of the Good Shepherd and watches over the flock entrusted to his guidance. The good sheep appreciate the joy of being with him. When he speaks the word, all obey, and recognize in his voice the voice of Jesus. The wicked, however, are deaf to his voice. They would wish to remain in the fold, but, meanwhile, they do not wish to obey, and are banished. O unruly sheep, who are in danger of being lost, Jesus wishes you also to be near the Shepherd.

Many souls are still far distant from the Church. If these souls would only realize how ardently Jesus longs to have them with Him, if they would but harken to the Shepherd's voice, they would quickly and joyfully return to Him Who loves them. Jesus has said that these sheep shall hear His voice and that then "there shall be one fold and one shepherd." [1] Grant, O Lord Jesus, that this unity may be soon our blessing.

[1] John x, 16.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

THE VALUE OF SUFFERING

"At that time, Jesus said to His disciples, A little while, and now you shall not see Me: and again a little while, and you shall see Me; because I go to the Father. Then some of His disciples said one to another, What is this that He saith to us, A little while, and you shall not see Me; and again a little while, and you shall see Me; and because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we know not what he speaketh. And Jesus knew that they had a mind to ask Him: and He said to them, Of this do you inquire among yourselves because I said, A little while, and you shall not see Me; and again a little while, and you shall see Me? Amen, amen, I say to you, that you shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice; and you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in labor hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but when she hath brought forth the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. So also you now indeed have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you." John xvi, 16-22.

THE words which the Apostles did not understand contain a mystery. Jesus is to leave the world and return to the Father, and so He takes care to warn them: "A little while, and you shall not see Me." [1] We can understand from these

[1] John xvi, 19.

words something of the affection which Christ has for His disciples. They are to remain in the midst of griefs, deprived of the comfort of His visible presence in the time of trial, but all this is to be only for a short time. He is to return quickly, and they are to see Him once more. They are to see Him "coming in the clouds of Heaven with much power and majesty." [1]

Our present life is as fleeting as a shadow. It is a life of grief for all,—for the good and for the wicked. The world laughs and makes merry, seeking to forget in pleasures the unhappiness which torments it. And indeed the more it laughs and proclaims itself joyful, the more evident is it that beneath its laugh and joy are tears and sadness. For the wicked especially, the grief is terrible. There is no comfort, no hope in their hearts. From the ills which befall them, they are incapable of deriving good. They clamorously rebel against their misfortunes like a steed which kicks back under the goad, and beats the rocks with his hoofs, uselessly sending forth a myriad of sparks. There is in this sort of blind grief the vain fury of desperation, as in the case of a shipwrecked person struggling furiously in the midst of the ocean, without hope of saving himself, with the certainty of dying. The true Christian inclines himself lovingly to the will of God, knowing that "we have not here a lasting city." [2] God wishes us to realize this truth. He wishes us to keep our hearts above with Him. "He wishes us," says Saint Augustine, "to seek that happiness whose

[1] Matthew xxiv, 30.
[2] Hebrews xiii, 14.

sweetness will not deceive us." How consoling are the words of the Lord! "Come to Me all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you." [1] Realize what it means to pray in grief before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. The heavy heart expands as the drooping flower revives under the warm rays of the sun.

"And yet a little while and you shall see Me." And yet a little while! The years which to us seem centuries are only an instant. Our sorrow is the light sorrow of a moment. What are the few days of life compared with eternity? But with these few days we may prepare ourselves to shine "as stars for all eternity." [2]

We should not, therefore, consider the things of the world which we see. We should concern ourselves rather with things which we do not see. Saint Paul tells us that "the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." [3]

Even in this life, suffering for Jesus is an inexhaustible fountain of joy and of peace. The lives of the saints have been constant proofs to the world of the truth of our Lord's teaching, "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven." [4] They alone possess true happiness.

Saint Catherine of Sienna was requested to choose between a crown of roses and a crown of thorns. Amid great transports of joy she chose the crown

[1] Matthew xi, 28.
[2] Daniel xii, 3.
[3] II Corinthians iv, 18.
[4] Matthew v, 10.

of thorns, because it had been the crown of Jesus. Another saint addressed to our Lord this sublime petition: "to suffer and to be despised for Thy sake." Saint Theresa, realizing that a life without suffering is a life without merit, prayed for suffering. If it is indeed so sweet, O Lord, to suffer for Thee, what then must it be to rejoice with Thee! We must raise our hearts to Heaven, therefore, and in the midst of affliction we may repeat the words of Saint Francis of Assisi:

> "So great is the good that awaits me
> That I rejoice in every pain."

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

THE MISSION OF THE HOLY GHOST

"At that time, Jesus said to His disciples, I go to Him that sent Me; and none of you asketh Me, Whither goest Thou? But because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow hath filled your heart. But I tell you the truth: it is expedient to you that I go; for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you, but if I go, I will send Him to you. And when He is come, He will convince the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment. Of sin, because they believed not in Me; and of justice, because I go to the Father, and you shall see Me no longer; and of judgment, because the prince of this world is already judged. I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now; but when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will teach you all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself; but what things soever He shall hear, He shall speak, and the things that are to come He shall show you. He shall glorify Me because He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it to you." John xvi, 5-14.

IT is evening. Jesus goes to the Garden of Olives for His usual prayer. The Apostles have been told that their Master is about to leave them, and they are filled with sadness at the thought of parting. But Jesus consoles them, saying, "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in Me. . . .I will come again and take you to Myself, that where I am you also may be. . . . I go to the Father . . . and I will ask the Father, and

He shall give you another Paraclete that He may abide with you forever." [1] The Apostles are to lose the comfort of Christ's visible presence, the encouragement of His glance and His words, but they are not to be left alone. The Holy Ghost is to come down upon them to give them inspiration and strength. The assistance which the Holy Ghost will give them is to be entirely interior and spiritual, assistance which is befitting for men already advanced in faith and virtue. The infant sees the face of the mother and is happy only when nestling in her arms. But when he becomes older, he knows how to act manfully without seeing his mother, although he still preserves his love for her in his heart.

The Holy Spirit will enkindle the hearts of the Apostles with love, and will illumine their minds with truth. They will know the highest mysteries of Christianity, which up to that time they were not prepared to hear, and so revelation will be finished.

The coming of the Holy Ghost concerns not only the good but also the wicked. Evil must be exposed and confounded. This mission of the Holy Spirit is not to take place, however, with the clear manifestation which will accompany the triumph of the good on the last day, when Jesus will come in glory to punish His enemies. It is a gentle, silent triumph by persuasion.

Every upright man who sees the marvellous advance of the work of Christ cannot but admit the stupendous, the supernatural power which moves it steadily, irresistibly forward. Such a man must rec-

[1] John xiv, 1-16.

ognize that notwithstanding the calumnies and the satanic hatred of the wicked, the mission of the Church in the midst of men is holy and divine. And ultimately he will be obliged to acknowledge that the prince of darkness has been conquered forever by Christ.

* * *

Shortly after the resurrection of the Saviour, a young Christian, Stephen by name, was brought before the Sanhedrin to be judged. With a truly sublime composure, he faced his wrathful enemies. The story of his courage, his eloquent speech before the council, and his glorious martyrdom is told in the Acts of the Apostles. His words to his judges burned with scorn and defiance. "As your fathers did, so do you also. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them who foretold of the coming of the Just One, of Whom you have been now the betrayers and murderers." [1] The judges were cut to the heart at the words of Stephen, "but he being full of the Holy Ghost, looking up steadfastly to Heaven, saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. And he said, 'Behold, I see the Heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.' And they crying out with a loud voice . . . ran violently upon him, and casting him forth without the city, they stoned him." [2] As the rocks struck him down, this prayer was heard: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." [3] His last words, as he

[1] Acts vii, 51, 52.
[2] Acts vii, 55-57.
[3] Acts vii, 58.

closed his eyes to open them in Heaven were, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." [4]

Saint Stephen was the first martyr, the first child of the Church to return to Christ blood for Blood.

The promise of Christ to His Apostles had been fulfilled. The Holy Ghost had inspired the children of Christ with unshakable courage and unswerving faith. And thus down through the glorious centuries of the Christian era the abiding presence of the Divine Counsellor has been an insurmountable bulwark against the onslaughts of the enemies of truth.

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[4]Acts vii, 59.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

PRAYER

"At that time, Jesus said to His disciples, Amen, amen I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you. Hitherto you have not asked anything in My name: ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full. These things I have spoken to you in proverbs: the hour cometh when I will no more speak to you in proverbs, but will show you plainly of the Father. In that day, you shall ask in My name; and I say not to you that I will ask the Father for you, for the Father Himself loveth you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again I leave the world, and go to the Father. His disciples say to Him, Behold, now Thou speakest plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now we know that Thou knowest all things, and Thou needest not that any man should ask Thee: by this we believe that Thou camest forth from God." John xvi, 23-30.

THE Lord wishes us to pray to Him. He loves to speak with us, to receive the confidences of our hearts, to be the inspiration of our desires, to be the centre of all our affections. Therefore, He tells us, "Ask and you shall receive." [1] These words of our Lord were uttered in a most solemn manner, almost in the form of an oath. "Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father

[1] John xvi, 24.

anything in My name, He will give it you." [1] This is the most consoling promise of Jesus. By the force of these words, our weakness becomes omnipotence through the all-powerful influence of prayer.

Saint Augustine reminds us, however, that this promise regards the welfare of the soul, for what may we ask in the name of the Saviour if we do not ask salvation? We may, it is true, ask for temporal blessings, but we should not forget that when Jesus taught us the "Our Father," He had us ask only for the bread necessary for a single day, "Give us this day our daily bread." He directs our attention, rather, to spiritual blessings, the glory of God, the triumph of the Church, and the forgiveness of our sins. These are the graces which we shall obtain infallibly, if with confident perseverance we trust ourselves to the goodness of God in the name of Jesus.

Prayer, indeed, is most necessary. All about us is the ominous flash of the tempest. Our wills tremble before the attractions of the world, the deceits of the devil and the rebellion of the passions. We are as shipwrecked mariners who feel our strength ebbing away and realize that if help does not come soon we are lost. All hope of salvation rests in our cry for assistance. We must raise our voices above the tumult of the storm. When, therefore, the tempest is most violent, all the stronger must be our cry, all the more insistent must be our prayer. Jesus is present on the sea while we are struggling. He extends His hands to help us. His reassuring voice comes over the waves to us and to all the souls who wish

[1] John xvi, 23.

to hear Him. "Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation." [1] No Christian should forget these words.

* * *

Saint Philip Neri, apostle of Rome, wished all his companions before retiring at night to implore the gift of holy perseverance through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. We should pray every day for this blessing because we need it every day.

Saint Alphonsus, the founder of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, closes one of his meditations on prayer with these most impressive words: "Pray, pray, pray, and never cease praying. If you pray you will certainly be saved; and if you do not pray, you will certainly be lost.

FEAST OF THE ASCENSION

"And Jesus eating together with them, He commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but should wait for the promise of the Father, which you have heard (saith He by My mouth: for John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence (on Pentecost). They therefore who were come together, asked Him, saying, Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? But He said to them, It is not for you to know the times or moments which the Father hath put in His own power; but you shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had said these things, while they looked on He was raised up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And

[1] Mark xiv, 38.

while they were beholding Him going up to Heaven, behold two men stood by them in white garments, who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to Heaven? This Jesus Who is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come, as you have seen Him going into Heaven." Acts i, 4-11.

"At that time, Jesus appeared to the eleven as they were at table: and He upbraided them with their incredulity and hardness of heart, because they did not believe them who had seen Him after He was risen again. And He said to them, Go ye into the whole world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned. And these signs shall follow them that believe. In My name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay their hands upon the sick, and they shall recover. And the Lord Jesus, after He had spoken to them, was taken up into Heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God. But they going preached everywhere, the Lord working withal, and confirming the word with the signs that followed." Mark xvi, 14-20.

ALL the members of the infant Church are assembled on the slope of the Mount of Olives, in order to be present at the last meeting with Jesus, Who is returning to His Father. Jesus raised His hands and blessed them, and "while they looked on, He was raised up and a cloud received Him out of their sight." [1] "Thou art bathed with light and with beauty," exclaims the liturgy, "Alleluia!" "Thy foot rests on the clouds and Thy ways on the wings of the wind."

Since that day the Church looks to Heaven. She

[1] Acts i, 9.

desires Jesus Who has ascended to the right hand of His Father, she invokes Him through the hearts of all the faithful. Her Spouse is to return as the angels have promised, "This Jesus Who is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come, as you have seen Him going into Heaven." [1] In every word of the New Testament, there is this deep feeling of expectation, this fervid expression of desire, "Looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." [2] In the last page of the Sacred Book the prayer becomes a cry: "Come, Lord Jesus!" [3] And Jesus, shortening the centuries, replies, "I come quickly." [4] And the Spouse answers, "Amen."

* * *

The day of His coming will be a wondrous feast, like the grand reception at a marriage festival; and in the meantime the faithful must be watchful as the prudent virgins of the parable. Let all the lamps be lighted, ready for the Bridegroom.

At dawn today the Church sings this hymn: "Pardon, O Lord, all our faults, and raise our hearts on high to Thee." And the inspiring prayer asks that in our thoughts at least we may dwell in Heaven with Jesus.

In the midst of the sorrows of this pilgrimage we may therefore look forward to our country and hasten towards it. "Our whole life," says Saint Augustine, "must be one desire for Heaven."

[1] Acts i, 11.
[2] Titus ii, 13.
[3] Apocalypse xxii, 20.
[4] Apocalypse xxii, 20.

Saint Philip Neri, the saint of joy and of Christian happiness, appreciated the importance of this truth. Three months before his death, speaking with Bernardino Corona, his devoted friend, he confided a secret to him. "Bernardino, the Pope wishes to make me a Cardinal. What do you think of it?" Corona answered that he should accept the honor if for no other reason than for the benefit of the Institute which he had founded. Saint Philip then told his friend that he would decline the honor, as the purpose of the community was the acquisition of heavenly and not earthly honors. When he spoke of the things of God, tears came to his eyes in such abundance that he was often obliged to change the subject of conversation. In reading the lives of the saints, he shed more tears than he pronounced words. Thus his mind was always elevated to heavenly things in one continuous prayer. Saint Augustine says, "He who has a great longing for Heaven is always at prayer, even though his tongue be silent." We should therefore look always to the welfare of our soul, praying fervently and with perseverance for final union in Heaven with Jesus Christ.

SUNDAY AFTER THE ASCENSION

PERSECUTION

"At that time, Jesus said to His disciples, When the Paraclete cometh, Whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, Who proceedeth from the Father, He shall give testimony of Me: and you shall give testimony, because you are with Me from the beginning. These things have I spoken to you, that you may not be scandalized. They will put you out of the synagogues: yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth a service to God. And these things will they do to you, because they have not known the Father, nor Me. But these things I have told you, that, when the hour shall come, you may remember that I told you." John xv, 2—xvi, 4.

TRUTH begets hatred, for all those who cannot bear the light of truth deride it. When Jesus sent His Apostles forth to preach the Gospel, He said to them, "Go; Behold I send you as lambs among wolves." [1] These words of the Saviour are interpreted as a prediction of the way in which the Church was to be persecuted. It was to be everywhere attacked, calumniated, deprived of the most sacred rights, persecuted in the name of civilization, of liberty, of science, and even in the very name of religion. This continual oppression, of which we all are aware, if not through personal experience, at

[1] Luke vi, 3.

least through history, has become one of the arguments in favor of the truth of the Catholic religion. Many are the churches which claim descent from Christ, but only one of these churches is unrelentingly assailed. Nor is there anything more significant than this instinctive intolerance of her enemies.

The good must not be scandalized, therefore, by persecution. Jesus has foretold it: "If the world hate you, know ye that it hath hated Me before you." [1] "And you shall be hated by all men for My name's sake." [2]

This hate is directed not only against the mother, but also against the children. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus," writes Saint Paul, "shall suffer persecution." [3] "Therefore," concludes Saint Augustine, "if you think that you will not suffer persecution, you have not yet commenced to be a Christian." Persecution will come from enemies, from friends, from superiors and from subordinates. They do not hate you, but they hate Christ Who lives in you. For Him, therefore, you are suffering. This thought will sustain you in trial, and will strengthen your resignation. "You, O Christian," exclaims Saint John Chrysostom, "are a delicate soldier if you think that you will conquer in the battle of life without a struggle." Be strong, therefore, and fight bravely. Remember the army to which you belong. Remember, fight and conquer. Jesus has said, "Have confidence, I have overcome the world." [4]

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[1] John xv, 18.
[2] Luke xxi, 17.
[3] Timothy iii, 12.
[4] John xvi, 33.

Every morning and every evening for forty days, a man of extraordinary stature, Goliath the giant, clad in armor and bearing a lance, came out from the camp of the Philistines and appeared before the trenches of Israel, hurling at them this taunt: "Give me a man, and let him fight with me hand to hand." [1] And because no one dared to oppose him, he returned to the camp, boasting: "I have defied the bands of Israel this day." [2]

A young man by the name of David who was not yet of age to bear arms, came by chance to the encampment, heard the insult, and was filled with rage. With the staff and the sling of a shepherd, David went forth against the Philistine. When the giant saw the youth, he cursed him and said, "Come to me, and I will give thy flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the earth." [3] And David answered, "Thou comest to me with a sword and with a spear and with a shield, but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, which thou hast defied." [4] With this cry, he ran towards him, hurling a stone with the sling. Goliath fell to the earth, struck by the stone in the forehead. And David took the sword of the giant and slew him. "And the Philistines seeing that their champion was dead, fled away." [5]

Thus also shall we conquer in the name of the Lord in the unequal struggle of life, even though our enemy be a giant.

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[1] I Kings xvii, 10.
[2] I Kings xvii, 10.
[3] I Kings xvii, 44.
[4] I Kings xvii, 45.
[5] I Kings xvii, 51.

PENTECOST SUNDAY

"Pentecost" is a Greek word which signifies fiftieth. It was the feast which the Jews celebrated fifty days after the Passover in order to commemorate the promulgation of the Law of Moses. On this day, the Holy Ghost came down on the Apostles. The Church observes the feast with great rejoicing. The red color of the vestments, giving to the day the name of "Easter of Roses," symbolizes the fire enkindled in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. The time for the fulfillment of the obligation of Easter Communion ends next Sunday.

"When the days of Pentecost were accomplished, they (the Apostles and disciples) were all together in one place; and suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak. Now there were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men out of every nation under heaven. And when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded in mind, because that every man heard them speak in his own tongue: and they were all amazed, and wondered, saying, Behold are not all these that speak, Galileans? And how have we heard every man our own tongue wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Lybia about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews also, and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians: we have heard them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God." Acts ii, 1-11.

"At that time, Jesus said to His disciples, If any one love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him. He that loveth Me not, keepeth not My words: and the word which you have heard is not Mine, but the Father's Who sent Me. These things have I spoken to you, abiding with you: but the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, Whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, do I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid. You have heard that I said to you, I go away, and I come unto you. If you loved Me, you would indeed be glad, because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it shall come to pass, you may believe. I will not now speak many things with you; for the prince of this world cometh, and in Me he hath not anything. But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given Me commandment, so do I." John xiv, 23-31.

FIFTY days after the resurrection all Jerusalem was observing the solemn feast of Pentecost, the closing festival of the Paschal season. The Apostles were in a closed room far from the throng, and together with the Blessed Virgin they were praying for the fulfillment of the promise of Jesus. "The Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring all things to your mind whatsoever I shall have said to you." [1] Suddenly, there came a sound from Heaven as of a mighty wind, like that of a waterfall or the raging of a tempest

[1] John xiv, 26.

churning up the seas or striking the forests. At the same time, there appeared tongues of fire which, separating, rested on the head of each of them, and all were filled with the Holy Ghost.

"Come, O Consoler," implores the Church, "Ray of Light, Father of the Poor, Light of Hearts! Come, O gentle Guest of the Soul, O sweet Comforter in trouble! Give to the faithful who trust in Thee Thy seven gifts, Amen. Alleluia."

The Apostles have received the strength of the Holy Spirit, and while the Synagogue commemorates the promulgation of the Old Law, they promulgate in the Name of God the New Law, of which Christ is the Author. Today, with the fullness of grace, they begin their mission. According to the prophecy of Jesus, a prophecy which the course of centuries has fulfilled, the new preachers are to carry the gospel from Jerusalem into Judea and Samaria, to the utmost bounds of the earth. They are to be witnesses, martyrs for Jesus.

Would these men, poor and timorous, unlettered laborers, would these men have been able to go forth to the conquest of the world without the inspiration of the Holy Ghost? Could these Apostles have succeeded in their tremendous, their humanly speaking impossible undertaking, without the guidance of the same Holy Spirit? They are transformed, they are strengthened, they are sanctified, and therefore they succeed in their mission.

The Apostles became possessed with burning zeal and unflinching courage. Speaking the humble dialect of the fishermen of the Lake of Genesareth, they preached Jesus Christ crucified and risen from

the dead. All who heard them understood them, even those who spoke entirely different languages. Peter had no fear in crying out, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: 'Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you, by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you as you also know: This same being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you by the hands of wicked men have crucified and slain. . . . This Jesus hath God raised again, whereof all we are witnesses.' " [1] And Peter continued, " 'Do penance, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins: and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' " [2] On this first day there were three thousand converts. The net of the fisherman and his small bark did not seem able to bear the weight of this miraculous draught. The Church was born.

The new faithful, inspired by the Holy Ghost, were most eager for the instruction of the Apostles. They were united in charity, attentive to the Holy Sacrifice, persevering in prayer. The example of fraternal charity which they gave had never been seen before, and it was observed with astonishment. "Men hate one another," it was said, "but these Christians love one another." "Their possessions and goods they sold and divided them all, according as every one had need." [3]

"If you have O Christian, one spark of love in your heart," concludes Saint Augustine, "guard it as

[1] Acts ii, 22-32.
[2] Acts ii, 38.
[3] Acts ii, 45.

a treasure, and further enkindle it by the breath of prayer, by humility, by penance, and by good works. Pray, for He Who hears you is not outside, but within you, and in secret He will hear and answer you."

FEAST OF THE HOLY TRINITY

The Paschal Season ends today, and the recitation of the Angelus at morning, at mid-day and in the evening is taken up again. The last period of the ecclesiastical year, which extends in the first Sunday of Advent, begins with this feast.

THE TRINITY

"At that time Jesus said to His disciples, All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth. Going, therefore, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." Matthew xxviii, 18-20.

THE prophet Isaias is rapt in ecstasy and has a vision. In the temple above an exalted throne, the Lord surrounded by angels, appears to him. The mantle of His glory descends with a fullness sufficient to cover the entire synagogue, and two choirs of seraphim alternate in song, chanting: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts. All the earth is full of His glory." [1] At the sound of the voices, the very doors of bronze vibrate, and the whole temple is filled with harmony.

Truly the entire earth is full of the majesty of God. The heavens, brilliant with the sun by day,

[1] Isaias vi, 3.

and sparkling with stars by night, bespeak continuously the glory of the Lord. Can there be even one heart on earth that does not feel, one mind that does not appreciate the irresistible force of this language? Everything tells us of this great God, for even silence speaks, the eternal silence of infinite space, proclaiming the power and the grandeur of the almighty King. This great Lord, Who is hidden from us, is at the same time so close to us that we may continually feel the tenderness of His inspirations and the severity of His reproofs.

And to us, creatures of God's goodness, He has deigned to make known the ineffable nature of His Being. He is one God in three divine persons, equal and distinct,—Father, Son and Holy Ghost. "The Father eternal, the Son eternal, the Holy Ghost eternal, and yet They are not three eternals but one eternal—not three Gods but one God. This is the Catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully and steadfastly, he cannot be saved. Glory be to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be world without end, Amen." [1]

"Bestir your mind," writes Saint Hilary, "and pass back in thought through the centuries. When you think of the first day, and you imagine the first rays of light dawning on the world, reflect that already God exists, God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, eternal beyond all time." The mind is lost in the contemplation of this thought. Words are inadequate, but faith teaches us that in this eternity the Son is equal to the Father, and the Holy

[1] Creed of St. Athanasius.

Spirit is equal to the Father and the Son, without any possible difference of existence, greatness or power. We praise the Father for creation, the Son for redemption, and the Holy Spirit for sanctification.

* * *

An interesting story is told of Saint Peter of Verona, who was born in that city in the year 1206 of heretical parents. Saint Peter fought and suffered for the faith from his childhood. When he was seven years of age, he was asked on a certain occasion by his uncle what he had learned in school. To the amazement and displeasure of the uncle, the boy recited the Apostles' Creed. Some years later, feeling that God had called him to a life of perfection, he courageously put on the white habit of the sons of Saint Dominic. His constant desire was to die for Jesus, and Jesus answered his prayer. One day in the year 1252, when he was traveling on the road from Como to Milan, he was struck down by an impious assassin, a member of an heretical sect. As the blood from the wound in his forehead streamed over his white habit, the stricken saint made one supreme act of faith and recited the Apostles' Creed. As the last breath left his dying body, he uttered these words: "I believe in life everlasting, amen." The Church now venerates him among her saints, under the name of Saint Peter, Martyr.

FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI

The feast of Corpus Christi was instituted by Urban IV in the thirteenth century to give greater honor to the Blessed Eucharist.

The joyful liturgy of the feast compensates for the more subdued commemoration of the institution of the Blessed Sacrament on Holy Thursday in the midst of the sorrows of the passion. Today, the Eucharist is solemnly exposed for adoration of the faithful, and is carried in triumph in devout processions. This feast has, therefore, the character of a public profession of faith in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. The prayers of the Church, laden with profound teaching and poetic beauty, were written by the "Angelic Doctor," Saint Thomas Aquinas.

THE EUCHARIST

"At that time, Jesus said to the multitudes of the Jews: My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead. He that eateth this bread shall live forever." John vi, 56-59.

THE human heart would not have been satisfied if Jesus had left only a remembrance, a symbol, or an image of Himself. A mother's picture, a lock of her hair, her rosary, do not satisfy the heart of the child after the mother is dead. Such a symbol or a remembrance is a torture rather than a comfort. Love demands presence. Therefore, Jesus has instituted this Sacrament of Love, in which He really remains in our midst. What matters it that we do not see Him? We know that He is there present and truly lives under the sacramental veils; and these veils are, indeed, very thin to the soul that has faith. "O Jesus," exultingly sings the Church, "O Jesus, Thou art veiled, but yet I see Thee!"

Jesus has taken the form of food and drink in

order that we may unite ourselves most intimately with Him, in order that He may become one with us. Who, indeed, can separate us from Jesus after Holy Communion? Not even the power of Heaven nor the depths of the earth, neither anguish nor persecution, nor life nor death, can separate us from the Charity of Christ. The word of God is infallible. "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me and I in him." [1]

The Eucharist is a remembrance of the passion of our Lord. It is a sacrament instituted in sorrow, It is a testament written in blood. The Blessed Eucharist has infinite power, therefore, to inspire in us the spirit of sacrifice. The Church has no stronger inspiration to strengthen the wills of those heroic souls who wish to devote themselves entirely to the service of the Lord than the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. O, how sad would that morning be for them on which they were not refreshed at the Holy Table! How sad, indeed, would be that evening on which they were not consoled by a visit to the Blessed Sacrament! And today the Church calls to her altars even the children. The Innocent Lamb of God wishes to unite Himself with the souls of innocent children, to strengthen them before the breath of sin contaminates them. "Suffer children to come to Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God." [2]

Christ comes for the last time in the Blessed Sacrament to the dying Christian. Every human comfort then is vain. Christ is the one Hope, the only

[1] John vi, 57.
[2] Luke xviii, 16.

Consoler. He hears the words of the priest: "Receive, O brother, the Viaticum for your difficult journey, the shield in your last battle." And with Jesus in his heart, the Christian peacefully composes himself, awaiting eternal happiness. And so from the beginning to the end of his exile is the devout Catholic near to God, awaiting with confidence the final union with Him in Heaven. "He that eateth this Bread shall live forever." [1]

* * *

The Blessed Eucharist is a Hidden Fire which has always inflamed souls with the love of God. Saint Teresa called the Blessed Sacrament, "Paradise on Earth." When she received Holy Communion, her afflictions, temptations and darkness of spirit vanished as clouds before the sun. Saint Alphonsus, in his early years, in the midst of his occupations as a lawyer, found time to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament every day, envying, in a manner, the flowers that could be so close to the tabernacle and the candles which melted before it. He began his career as a writer with that most valuable book, "Visits to the Blessed Sacrament," which, translated into all languages, is even today the delight of pious souls.

When Saint Philip Neri was dying, the Blessed Sacrament was carried into his room. The saint was enraptured, and cried out with joy, "Behold my Love, behold my God! Give me quickly my Love!" Then he burst into tears. "My Lord, I am not worthy, nor was I ever worthy. I have never done

[1] John vi, 59.

any good." And then Cardinal Frederick Borromeo approached him with the Sacred Host, his face was transfigured as he breathed his last prayer: "Come, O Lord." And Jesus came.

You, also, Christian soul, are accustomed to receive Holy Communion. By a careful preparation and a fervent thanksgiving, you may make ready for the last visit of Jesus to you.

SUNDAY AFTER THE FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI

THE SACRED HEART

"At that time, Jesus spoke to the Pharisees this parable: A certain man made a great supper, and invited many. And he sent his servant, at the hour of supper, to say to them that were invited, that they should come, for now all things are ready. And they began all at once to make excuse. The first said to him, I have bought a farm, and must needs go out and see it; I pray thee, hold me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to try them; I pray thee, hold me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. And the servant returning, told these things to his lord. Then the master of the house being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the feeble and the blind, and the lame. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said to the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. But I say unto you, that none of these men that were invited shall taste of my supper." Luke xiv, 16-24.

The significance of this parable is evident. Jesus has invited all mankind to partake of the Bread of Angels, and there are many who ignore His invitation. The most ungrateful are they who have received an abundance of gifts, genius, riches and

honors. The pretexts on which they decline the invitation to the banquet are most trifling. " 'I have bought a farm, and I must needs go out and see it; I pray thee hold me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen and I go to try them; I pray thee hold me excused.' " [1] The slights from those who should love Him most are for Jesus much more painful than the wounds which He received in His scourging. Neglect and bitter rebuffs from those who profess to be His friends, and black ingratitude instead of warm, filial acceptance of His gentle invitation, wound and tear His Sacred Heart. There is no torment more keenly cutting or more deeply wounding than indifference and disdain from those we love. Because, therefore, the favored ones refuse to answer the invitation, Jesus seeks his guests from among the poor and the humble, and they fill the places at his table. "O Father," rejoices Jesus, . . . "Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones." [2]

When Jesus was abandoned by all during His agony in the garden, He was enduring all the pains of martyrdom in His Sacred Heart. He had wished to have His Apostles with Him, but they forsook Him and passed the time in sleep. They could not even watch a single hour with Him. Only one of the Apostles was watching, and this one, the traitor, was making plans to betray Him.

Jesus is forsaken and abandoned even today. Not only in the small churches of the country is He alone for a great part of the time, but even in the

[1] Luke iv, 18, 19.
[2] Luke x, 21.

city churches, in magnificent cathedrals and in grand basilicas, the Prisoner of Love is left in solitude. One small light is burning before the tabernacle, a meagre recompense for the darkness in ungrateful hearts. It seems that His friends are sleeping, while His enemies are plotting and offending Him. O that souls would watch with Him Who is left alone, in order to make reparation for the ingratitude and the insults of those who forget Him!

* * *

While Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque was praying one day before the Blessed Sacrament, the Lord appeared to her. On His breast was visible His Sacred Heart, glowing with fire, and encircled by a crown of thorns. She could also see the wound made by the spear which pierced His side. "Behold the Heart," Jesus said to her, "that has loved men so much and has given every proof of this love! And in return I receive indifference and ingratitude. That which wounds Me the most is the coldness and indifference of those who should show Me a special devotion. I ask that the first Friday after the octave of the Feast of Corpus Christi be observed as a special feast in reparation for the insults which I have received in the Blessed Sacrament."

The promises of Jesus to Saint Margaret Mary in favor of those devoted to His Sacred Heart are most consoling:

"1. I will give them all the graces necessary for their state of life.
2. I will give peace to their families.
3. I will console them in all their afflictions.

4. I will be their secure refuge in life and more especially at their death.
5. I will bestow abundant blessings on all their undertakings.
6. Sinners shall find in My Heart the source and infinite ocean of mercy.
7. Tepid souls shall become fervent.
8. Fervent souls shall rise to high perfection.
9. I will bless the homes in which the image of My Sacred Heart shall be exposed and honored.
10. I will give to priests the gift of moving the most hardened hearts.
11. Persons who propagate this devotion shall have their names inscribed in My Heart never to be effaced from It.
12. I promise thee in the excess of the mercy of My Heart, that My all-powerful love will grant to all those who receive Holy Communion on the first Friday of every month for nine consecutive months, the grace of final perseverance and they shall not die under My displeasure, nor without receiving the sacraments, and that My Heart shall be their secure refuge of that last hour."

Devotion to the Sacred Heart has now extended throughout all the world. Next Friday, the feast of the Sacred Heart, Jesus wishes you also, O Christian, to be among those who approach the altar. He invites you today. Do not allow your thoughts to be entirely taken up with the interests of the world, but for a few moments, at least, think of Him.

FEAST OF THE HOLY APOSTLES PETER AND PAUL

SAINT PETER AND THE POPE

"At that time, Jesus came into the quarters of Caesarea Philippi, and He asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that the Son of Man is? But they said, Some, John the Baptist, and other some, Elias, and others Jeremias or one of the prophets. Jesus saith to them, But whom do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered, and said, Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answering, said to him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father Who is in heaven: and I say to thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; and I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven." Matthew xvi, 13-19.

THERE were many false notions about Jesus. Some thought that He was John the Baptist miraculously returned to the world to preach penance. Others were of the opinion that He was one of the prophets.

Only the Apostle Simon, son of Jonas, had received the great revelation from the Father. Jesus was not the Precursor, but He was the Messias Himself, the only begotten Son of the Most High

God. Simon replied to the question of the Lord in regard to His identity with that wonderful profession of faith which, as Saint Leo the Great says, resounds unceasingly, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." [1] "Jesus answering said to him . . . 'Thou art Peter; and upon this rock, I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' " [2] The Lord changed the name of Simon to Peter, which in the Aramaic language that Christ spoke means "rock." Peter is the rock on which Christ is to build His Church. "And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in Heaven." [3] Saint Optatus, Bishop of Milevis in Numidia in the fourth century, observes that it is somewhat startling to note that of all the Apostles, the one to whom Christ gave the keys was the one who in a moment of weakness had denied Him. Saint Optatus further remarks that this is providential, because the sinner will open the doors to the innocent, and it might happen that the innocent would close the doors against the sinner.

At the death of Saint Peter, the power represented by the keys passed to the Pontiff who succeeded to Saint Peter's chair, and thus down through the centuries it has continued to the present time. Two names are written across the pages of history, Rome and the Pope,—the Pope because of Saint Peter, and Rome because of the Pope. The City of the

[1] Matthew xvi, 16.
[2] Matthew xvi, 17, 18.
[3] Mathetw xvi, 19.

Cæsars, dread mistress of the world, has become the City of the Soul, the City of all souls. "Happy Rome," sings the vesper hymn, "consecrated by the blood of the most glorious of the Apostles!" "Thy spiritual beauty shall never fade." "I marvel at this city," wrote Saint John Chrysostom, "not for the treasures of its gold and marble, but because of her jewels that sparkle with splendor, the tomb of Saint Peter, Prince of the Apostles, and the tomb of Saint Paul, Apostle of the Gentiles."

The Pope is the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the pastor of all the flock, the centre of unity of the Catholic Church. Because of this fact, the Papacy has been the centre of violent storms from the very beginning of the Church's existence. The first Christians prayed for Saint Peter in prison,—"prayer was made without ceasing by the Church unto God for him." [1] The present members of the Church should pray for the Holy Father, that the Lord preserve him and make him blessed upon earth, and deliver him not up to the will of his enemies.

History tells of a celebrated utterance made at the Council of Chalcedon. Six hundred and thirty bishops from all parts of the world were in attendance. They were listening with great veneration to a letter from the distant Pontiff, Saint Leo the Great. At the end of the letter, the fathers, deeply moved, cried out in one accord: "Peter has spoken through the voice of Leo." We must receive the word of the Holy Father with like veneration on every occasion.

[1] Acts xii, 5.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT OF FISHES

"At that time, when the multitude pressed upon Jesus to hear the word of God, He stood by the lake of Genesareth. And He saw two ships standing by the lake; but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets; and going up into one of the ships that was Simon's, He desired him to draw back a little from the land: and sitting He taught the multitudes out of the ship. Now when He had ceased to speak, He said to Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon, answering, said to Him, Master, we have labored all the night and have taken nothing, but at Thy word I will let down the net. And when they had done this, they enclosed a very great multitude of fishes; and their net broke; and they beckoned to their partners that were in the other ship, that they should come and help them; and they came, and filled both the ships, so that they were almost sinking. Which when Simon Peter saw, he fell down at Jesus's knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was wholly astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of fishes which they had taken: and so were also James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were Simon's partners. And Jesus saith to Simon, Fear not: from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And having brought their ships to land, leaving all things they followed Him." Luke v, 1-11.

THE goodness of Jesus and the divine truth of His teachings influenced all hearts. People thronged about Him to hear His words, and He spoke to them from Peter's boat, instructing and encouraging them.

When He had ceased to speak, He said to Simon: "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon, answering, said to Him, 'Master, we have labored all the night and have taken nothing, but at Thy word I will let down the net.' " [1] The net scarcely sank into the water when he suddenly felt it become heavy. The large draught of fishes filled him with amazement. The boats were filled nearly to the sinking point. A ray of light illumined the mind of the poor fisherman. He then understood who Jesus was, and kneeling before the Lord, he cried in one of those warm, characteristic utterances: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man." [2] But Jesus reassured him, saying: "Fear not: from henceforth thou shalt catch men." [3] Peter was to be Christ's Apostle. As the multitude then thronged about Christ, so would it one day throng about Peter. The bark of Peter was to be the Church of Christ.

"The net of Peter," observes Saint Ambrose, "takes souls from the depths and carries them to light. It reaches silently among the tumultous waves even to the abyss and carries souls on high, not to kill them, but to save them."

Jesus is in the bark of Peter today. The realization of this fact is most important for those outside the Church who are seeking the truth. It is to the bark of Peter that they must turn for salvation.

Two years ago, an Anglican wrote these memorable words: "The appeal to union can come only

[1] Luke v, 4, 5.
[2] Luke v, 8.
[3] Luke v, 10.

from Rome. Our eyes are turned to the Supreme Pastor, and we listen to His voice from the tombs of Peter and of Paul. In the midst of our divisions in the east and in the west, our cry is always back to the first Pontiff."

Saint Ambrose expresses the same idea in a more striking manner: "Where Peter is, there is the Church; and where the Church is, there is life and not death."

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

FRATERNAL CHARITY

"At that time, Jesus said to His disciples, Except your justice abound more than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. You have heard that it was said to them of old (in the law of Moses), Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you, that whosoever is (even) angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca (a word of extreme insult), shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother; and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift." Matthew v, 20-24.

THE fifth commandment of the Old Law imposed a severe penalty for any bodily injury to another. The New Law is more especially concerned with the peace and safety of the soul. A Christian may not even get angry with his brother. Anger is a tempest which embroils hearts and fills them with rancor and hatred. "Influenced by this passion," says Saint Augustine, "the tongue becomes a sword which pierces and kills."

Slander, insults, threats, inflict real wounds on

our neighbors and also on ourselves, because just as much grief and harm as we cause them, just so much evil do we bring on our own souls. Jesus tells us to consider that the one whom we are wounding is our own brother, son of the same Father. "Let not the sun go down upon your anger," [1] says Saint Paul. We must not sleep even one night with resentment in our hearts. We must exchange greetings with our brother, meet him with a smile, and we shall feel our hearts expand with joy and gladness.

If we are the offender, why should we delay in making reparation for the injury which we have committed? We have enkindled a fire which we, alone, can extinguish. We must act at once, for we should not permit the fire to rage.

If, instead of offending, we have been offended, why should we not pardon the injury? How can we kneel before our Heavenly Father asking Him to forgive us our trespasses while we, ourselves, do not forgive those who trespass against us?

Therefore, offender and offended, while our souls are overcast by the shadow of sin, we may not present ourselves before the altar. Each of us shall go first in search of the other, generously overcoming our inclinations in the name of Him Who gave His life for His executioners, Who gave His life for us. Then we may approach the altar, and Jesus will open His arms to us.

* * *

There is a story which takes us back to the first decade of the eleventh century. John Gualbert, a

[1] Ephesians iv, 26.

noble and brilliant Florentine knight, was saddened by the death of Hugo, his only brother, killed by a bitter rival. Burning with anger at the loss of his brother and the injury to his family, John Gualbert swore revenge. Traveling one day with his soldiers, he met his brother's murderer unarmed and on foot. The pathway was narrow, flight was impossible. The murderer realized that he was lost. In a moment he would feel the sword of the angry Florentine. He fell on his knees and opened his arms in the form of a cross, almost as if preparing for death. The day was Good Friday, and the posture of his enemy brought to Gualbert's mind the death of Jesus on the cross. How could he kill this man on the day on which the Saviour had opened His arms and granted pardon to those who were putting Him to death? He threw down the sword and forgave his enemy. A short time afterwards, with his heart still trembling with emotion, Gualbert entered the neighboring church of San Miniato. He knelt at the foot of the crucifix, and through the mist of his tears he saw Jesus on the cross bowing His head towards him, as if to return to him the kiss of peace which he had given to his enemy. His eyes were then opened to the vanities of the world, and he decided to abandon the comforts and to cast aside the honors which his position gave him. He renounced everything, and fled to Camaldoli, a silent hermitage in the mountains. He was afterwards the founder of the Vallombrosan Congregation of religious. On the twelfth day of July of each year, the Church celebrates his feast as Saint John Gualbert.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE MULTIPLICATION OF THE LOAVES

"At that time, when there was a great multitude with Jesus, and had nothing to eat, calling His disciples together He saith to them, I have compassion on the multitude, for behold they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat; and if I shall send them away fasting to their homes they will faint in the way, for some of them came from afar off. And His disciples answered Him, From whence can any one fill them here with bread in the wilderness? And He asked them, How many loaves have ye? who said, Seven. And He commanded the people to sit down on the ground. And taking the seven loaves, giving thanks He broke, and gave to His disciples to set before them; and they set them before the people. And they had a few little fishes, and He blessed them, and commanded them to be set before them. And they did eat, and were filled; and they took up that which was left of the fragments, seven baskets: and they that had eaten were about four thousand: and He sent them away." Mark viii, 1-9.

THE great miracle of the multiplication of the loaves typifies what occurs every day in the Church. Jesus refreshes tired souls today with the Bread of life. "I am the Living Bread which came down from Heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever and the bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world." [1]

[1]John vi, 51, 52.

If Jesus had not Himself remained with us, the most venerated sanctuaries would have been those places which He had once visited.

But Jesus has remained with us in the most Holy Sacrament of the altar. It is not necessary, therefore, to cross the sea and make a pilgrimage to the East. We are not obliged to visit that portion of Palestine where the angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will." [1] Here in our very midst, He has made His home on our altars, and here we may adore Him and love Him.

When Moses approached the miraculously burning bush, he heard this voice: "Put off the shoes from thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." [2] With what veneration, therefore, should we enter the house of God and approach the altar! Our souls should be as immaculate as a ray of light, and our hearts as pure as if cleansed with spiritual fire. And thus the Blessed Sacrament will be our Paradise on earth, giving us a foretaste of the joys which await us in Heaven. The joys of the future life are anticipated here not alone for one fleeting moment when we receive Holy Communion. We may go to Jesus in the tabernacle at any time. He gladly welcomes us and consoles us.

When the priest raises the Sacred Host before Holy Communion saying, "Behold the Lamb of God," Saint Catherine of Genoa was accustomed to repeat to herself: "Quickly, O Lord, come quickly."

[1] Luke ii, 14.
[2] Exodus iii, 5.

She could scarcely endure that brief interval between seeing Him and receiving Him.

* * *

Sister Anna of the Cross, formerly Countess of Feria, a noble lady of Spain, was left a widow at twenty-four years of age. She became a nun in the convent of Saint Clara in Montiglia, thus devoting herself to a Spouse Who would never leave her. She could see the altar of the Blessed Sacrament from her small cell near the tribune of the church and thus she could pass all day with Jesus. She was asked how she could pass so many hours before the tabernacle, and she gave this memorable answer: "I adore Him, I thank Him, I love Him, I beseech Him." We may meditate on this response. Before the altar, the thought of gratitude will inspire us with love, and love will render more precious our prayer.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE WILL OF GOD

"At that time, Jesus said to His disciples, Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. By their fruits you shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so, every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and the evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can an evil tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them. Not every one that saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of My Father Who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matthew vii, 15-21.

NO one enters into the Kingdom of Heaven if he has not on earth fulfilled the will of God. God requires of His creatures perfect obedience. At His will, the heavens smile or frown, the sea is calm or enraged, the earth is peaceful or troubled. And just as inanimate creation must, perforce, observe God's law, so intelligent man, the king of creation, should voluntarily conform Himself to the will of his Creator. God wishes willing obedience, for more glory is given to Him by one intelligent mind which adores Him, one free will that inclines towards Him, than all the stars cours-

ing the firmament that know not Him whose glory they proclaim.

The Lord taught us this prayer: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." [1] In Heaven, there is not one discordant voice, not even one angel who does not love, adore and carry out the will of God. We delude ourselves, therefore, if we think that we shall one day be admitted to a place with the angels if on earth we do not obey the will of God.

Religion, for many of us, consists only in calling ourselves "Christians." We repeat with our lips, "Lord, Lord," but the observance of God's law requires something more than words. By our words we may resemble the sheep of the flock, but by our lives, unfortunately, we may resemble the wolves.

The disobedience of some is evident. The dress they wear, the magazines they read, their entire manner of living, contradicts the law of God. "O woman," writes Tertullian, "cultivate the virtue of modesty. If you are a mother, because of respect for your children; if you are a sister, because of respect for your brothers; if you are a daughter, because of respect for your father and your brothers. All ages are in danger on your account."

If, therefore, you call yourself a Catholic and you do not the works of a Catholic, either change your life or change your name. Not the one who repeats, "Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the will of My Father

[1] Matthew vi, 10.

Who is in Heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven." [1]

* * *

God had decreed the destruction of the people of Amalec, a bloodthirsty and cruel race. He sent Saul, the king of Juda, to punish them, but against the wish of God treasures and flocks were seized as booty by the avenging army. God then sent Samuel, the prophet, to the camp of the victors. "And when Samuel was come to Saul, Saul said to him: 'Blessed be thou of the Lord, I have fulfilled the word of the Lord.' And Samuel said, 'What meaneth then this bleating of the flocks which soundeth in my ears, and the lowing of the herds which I hear?' " [2] And Saul with subtle falsehood answered, " 'the people spared the best of the sheep and of the herds that they might be sacrificed to the Lord thy God.' And Samuel said, 'When thou wast a little one in thy own eyes . . . the Lord anointed thee to be king over Israel. . . . For as much therefore as thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord hath also rejected thee from being king.' " [3] Some time later, Saul was defeated on Mount Gelboe, and the sceptre of Juda passed to David, the chosen one of the Lord.

"Obedience is better than sacrifices; and to harken rather than to offer the fat of rams." [4]

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[1] Matthew vii, 21.
[2] I Kings xv, 13, 14.
[3] I Kings xv, 15-23.
[4] I Kings xv, 22.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE UNJUST STEWARD

"At that time, Jesus spoke to His disciples this parable: There was a certain rich man who had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods; and he called him, and said to him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship, for now thou canst be steward no longer. And the steward said within himself, What shall I do, because my lord taketh away from me the stewardship? To dig I am not able: to beg I am ashamed. I know what I will do, that when I shall be put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. Therefore calling together every one of his lord's debtors, he said to the first, How much dost thou owe my lord? But he said, A hundred barrels of oil. And he said to him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then he said to another, And how much dost thou owe? Who said, A hundred quarters of wheat. He said to him, Take thy bill and write eighty. And the lord commended the unjust steward, for as much as he had done wisely; for the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. And I say to you, Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings." Luke xvi, 1-9.

THIS parable calls to the attention of the good the shrewdness of the wicked. The unjust steward realizes that the day on which he must render an account of his stewardship is at hand.

He therefore provides for the future by making friends for himself with the money of his master. The Christian should follow the example of the steward not in his injustice and dishonesty, but in his foresight in providing for the future. He should use the means at his disposal to make friends with the poor of Christ, and thus insure himself for eternity.

The money and the other possessions which we treasure so highly are not ours forever. The Great Master of all things will some day take them from us, and we shall be left poor and naked, as we were born. Men succeed one another in the possession of riches as officials succeed one another in the administration of a business. They have no other function than to procure the greatest return on the goods which they have received. The greater our wealth and opportunities, the greater number of good works must we perform. We should remember that the day on which we must render our account is near at hand. "And unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required." [1]

Money is, for the most part, for men an occasion of sin, a snare of Satan. Therefore the Lord calls it "the mammon of iniquity." [2] It can be, however, a fruitful source of blessings and a key to Paradise. "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. . . . Give, and it shall be given to you. . . . For with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again." [3] We should

[1] Luke xii, 48.
[2] Luke xvi, 9.
[3] Luke vi, 36-38.

remember that while we are helping the poor they are helping us. The prayers of the widow and the orphan ascend to the tribunal of God, and the answer to those prayers falls in a gentle rain of blessings on their benefactors. Wherefore the Scripture says: "Water quencheth a flaming fire and alms resisteth sins." [1]

When Tobias thought that he was about to die, one of the admonitions which he gave to his son was, "Give alms out of thy substance, and turn not away thy face from any poor person; for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee. According to thy ability, be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little, for thus thou storest up to thyself a good reward for the day of necessity. For alms deliver from all sin and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness." [2]

When Jesus was passing through the city of Jericho, a man who was unable to see Him because of the crowd ran forward and mounted a tree. The man was Zacheus, a usurer, and the leader of the publicans. When the Saviour came to the place, "He saw him and said to him, 'Zacheus, make haste and come down, for this day I must abide in thy house.' " [3] The bystanders murmured at this, saying, "He was gone to be a guest with a man that was a sinner." [4] But Zacheus was already converted, and he at once made that generous resolve which so con-

[1] Ecclesiasticus iii, 33.
[2] Tobias iv, 7-11.
[3] Luke xix, 5.
[4] Luke xix, 7.

soled the Lord, " 'the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have wronged any man of anything, I restore him fourfold.' Jesus said to him: 'This day is salvation come to this house.' " [1]

The Saviour wishes also to abide, O Christian soul, in your house. He wishes to enter into your heart. He desires to come not as a Judge but as a merciful Father. Open your heart at once to receive Him, and on "this day is salvation come to this house." [2]

[1] Luke xix, 9.
[2] Luke xix, 9.

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE EXPULSION OF THE TRADESMEN FROM THE TEMPLE

"At that time, when Jesus drew near to Jerusalem, seeing the city, He wept over it, saying, If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day the things that are to thy peace; but now they are hidden from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee; and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone, because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation (by the Saviour). And entering into the temple, He began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought, saying to them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves. And He was teaching daily in the temple." Luke xix, 41-47.

JESUS views Jerusalem from Mount Olivet, and His heart is filled with sadness. "And when He drew near, seeing the city, He wept over it." [1] In a short time He is to enter the Holy City, where He is to be joyfully received and welcomed. The multitude are to cast palms and flowers before Him and are to cry, " 'Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.' " [2] And yet Jesus weeps.

[1] Luke xix, 41.
[2] Matthew xxi, 9.

All the Jewish world, of which Jerusalem is the capital, is to be destroyed. "Jerusalem that killest the prophets" [1] and that is now to crucify the Redeemer is not to have left a "stone upon a stone." [2] God is to inflict awful punishment. The Mosaic Law as interpreted by the lives of the Pharisees is nothing but a mockery. The magnificent temple, respendent with gold and marble, is no longer used for prayer. It is in the power of a group of usurers and bargainers.

"And Jesus went into the temple of God and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers and the chairs of them that sold doves. And He saith to them, 'It is written: My house shall be called the house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves.' " [3] This is the first spark of that divine retribution which within forty years the legions of Rome with fire and sword will fully execute.

Saint Ambrose exclaims in strikingly chiselled language: "Christ destroys the altars to erect to God one altar." The spouse of Christ is the Church, and the synagogue is entirely rejected. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: because you shut the kingdom of Heaven against men, . . . because you devour the houses of widows praying long prayers." [4] Woe to those who persecute the Church, woe to those who defraud her, woe to those who malign her!

* * *

At the very outbreak of the persecution of Va-

[1] Luke xiii, 34.
[2] Matthew xxiv, 2.
[3] Matthew xxi, 12, 13.
[4] Matthew xxiii, 13, 14.

lerian, Pope Sixtus II and his deacons were condemned to death for refusing to offer incense before the statue of Mars. The imperial prefect spared the life of the youngest deacon, Lawrence, because he hoped with wily cunning to take advantage of his youth. He wished to learn from Lawrence where the money of the poor was kept. He hoped to steal both the gold of the poor and the faith of the deacon. Pope Sixtus consoled Lawrence as the holy Pontiff was on his way to martyrdom: "Do not think, son, that I am leaving you, for within three days you also will follow me. In the meanwhile, give all that we have to the poor." In a short time, the possessions of the Church had been distributed to the widows and orphans. And when the prefect summoned Lawrence to give up the treasures of the Church, the deacon surrounded by the poor appeared before the prefect and said to him: "These are the treasures of the Church." The anger of the prefect knew no bounds, but neither imprisonment, nor scourging, nor his martyrdom by being burned on the gridiron, broke the spirit of this intrepid youth. Much weaker was the flame that burned his body than the flame of love that was burning in his soul. With true Roman courage, he withstood the tyrant and told him that the poor had deposited the riches of the Church in Heaven. And thus he died, Saint Lawrence, martyr of the faith and of the poor of Christ, on the tenth day of August in the year 261.

They who think that they can destroy the Church by confiscating her possessions should realize that she does not fear spoilation and she does not fear the sword. Saint John Chrysostom has said: "What

Christ has built no one can destroy, and no one can build again what Christ has torn down. He has destroyed the temple of Jerusalem and no one has been able to rebuild it. He has established the Church, and no one has been able to destroy it."

FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

"At that time, Jesus entered into a certain town; and a certain woman, named Martha, received Him into her house: and she had a sister called Mary, who sitting also at the Lord's feet, heard His word. But Martha was busy about much serving; who stood and said, Lord, hast Thou no care that my sister hath left me alone to serve? Speak to her, therefore, that she help me. And the Lord answering, said to her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and art troubled about many things: but one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part which shall not be taken away from her." Luke x, 38-42.

THE meaning of this passage from the Gospel is strikingly evident. The town which the Saviour enters is the small world in which we live. The woman who goes to meet Him and receives Him in her home is the most blessed of all women, Mary, the Mother of God. Mary fulfilled for Christ the offices of both Martha and Mary. She had the cares and anxieties of Martha, she had the prayerful devotion of Mary. From the day of the Annunciation when "the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us," [1] to the day on which the bruised and cruelly lacerated body of her crucified

[1] John i, 14.

Son was taken from the Cross, Mary's life was a constant oblation, a never ceasing sacrifice of self. But Mary joined with her life of active participation in the life and work of the Saviour the meditations of the contemplative life. She combined with the solicitude of Martha the delicacy of Mary. She is happy in close association with her Child, in feeling the warmth of His infinite love, in keeping His words as a treasure in her heart. She clothes Him with her poverty at His birth, she guards Him amid the dangers of exile, she watches over Him in the little home of Nazareth. She follows Him in His ministry throughout Judea and Galilee. She is with Him always, despite discomforts, despite sorrows, despite even her own martyrdom, in order to see Him and hear Him, following Him even to the Cross, when the sword prophesied by Simeon transfixed her soul.

Mary had been born into the world without the stain of original sin on her soul. She was not subject, therefore, to death, which is sin's punishment. She died not because of necessity, but, rather, to follow her divine Son even in this final act of love. Her virgin body did not undergo corruption, but by an anticipated resurrection it was triumphantly assumed into Heaven.

"Daughter of Sion," sings the Church, "how beautiful and gentle thou art!" [1] "Thou soarest quickly and lightly, as a cloud of incense. The starry sky radiates with light under thy feet, and thou art seated, exalted, above the angels, near the throne of God." [2]

[1] Divine Office.
[2] Divine Office.

"Mary hath chosen the best part,"[1] and her choice is consecrated for eternity.

* * *

A young man eighteen years of age had endured much ill-treatment from members of his own family. He had resolved to consecrate his life to the Blessed Virgin and despite opposition to this call which he encountered at home he made a pilgrimage on foot from Vienna to Rome to enter the Society of Jesus. This young man, Saint Stanislaus Kostka, is numbered among the saints who have been most devoted to Mary. When her name was spoken, his very countenance proclaimed the love and joy he felt. "How could I not love her," he said, "for is she not my mother?"

On the first of August, 1568, Stanislaus told his companions that the Madonna wished him to be in Heaven for the feast of the Assumption in order to assist at her triumph. On the evening of the feast of Saint Lawrence, the tenth of August, he became slightly ill. For four days he did nothing but long for Heaven, and cover with kisses his rosary and his picture of Mary. Finally he saw his Blessed Mother with a choir of angels approaching to take him to Heaven. And so in an ecstasy of joy, strengthened by the Blessed Sacrament, his face radiant with pleasure at the beauty of Mary's smile, Stanislaus closed his eyes in death to open them in life eternal. It was the morning of the fifteenth of August, the feast of the Assumption. Through the windows of the novitiate of Saint Andrew on the Quirinal Hill in

[1]Luke x, 42.

Rome, the first sound of the bells in the Church of Saint Mary Major joyously proclaimed the dawn of Mary's feast-day. In one of the rooms was the dead body of Saint Stanislaus, but his soul was already in Heaven. Smile, O Mother, on us who also yearn to be with thee. Keep our thoughts above with thee, now and at the hour of our death.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN

"At that time, Jesus spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves as just, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one was a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee standing, prayed thus with himself: O God, I give Thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers; as also is this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes toward heaven, but struck his breast, saying, O God, be merciful to me a sinner. I say to you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Luke xviii, 9-14.

BY this parable, Jesus wishes to teach us how we may obtain mercy from God.

He places two men in contrast, one who believes himself to be a saint, the other who knows himself to be a sinner. The first, a Pharisee, devotes all his attention to the external observance of the law. If the law imposes only an annual fast, he fasts twice during the week. If it imposes tithes on the products of the fields and live stock, he extends this obligation also to the income from his property. Certainly, he should be able to have much merit before God.

But, however, he is proud and self-confident. He considers himself much superior to other men. The rest of men are sinners; he alone is just. He does not pray, for the haughty never pray. He does not believe that there is anything that he should ask of God. Instead, he exults and insults; he exults by praising and adoring himself, and insults the poor publican who truly prays.

He comes down from the temple filled with pride. He has the idea that he is a saint, but his heart is still immersed in sin.

The publican, on the contrary, realizes his own wretchedness. He knows that he has been an avaricious usurer. He feels the weight of his iniquities, and does not dare to approach the sanctuary, does not even venture to raise his eyes to Heaven. He strikes his breast in sorrow, and from his grief-laden heart pours forth a prayer: " 'O God, be merciful to me a sinner.' " [1] He makes no reference to any other man. He conceives himself to be the most unworthy of all, the farthest from God, the least deserving of God's mercy.

But the more he humbles himself, the more does God incline toward him. The more hatred he conceives for his sins, the more grace God gives him, arousing in his breast a veritable tempest of remorse and repentance. And so he comes down from the temple with his heart raised up, with an untroubled conscience, reconciled with God.

The lessons of this parable are exemplified in the conversion of the sinful woman of Capharnaum.[2]

[1] Luke xviii, 13.
[2] Luke vii.

Moved by the grace of God, heartsick at her life of sin, she had endeavored for some time to meet Jesus to obtain pardon. She desired once more to enjoy the friendship of God. She heard that the Saviour was at dinner in the house of a rich Pharisee, and, braving the anger of the Pharisee, she entered the room where the guests were assembled. The eyes that had sinned so much found Jesus, and she threw herself at His feet. Weeping bitterly, she bathed them with her tears "and wiped them with the hairs of her head." [1]

Not a single word could she utter, but her every action, her entire being, was a public protestation of sorrow, devotion, and of unconquerable love, "rushing to trample down," as Saint Augustine says, "all human respect, to smother all the derision of the haughty Pharisees." Jesus, alone, understood her. His heart throbbed with infinite mercy. "And He said to her, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee . . . thy faith hath made thee safe, go in peace.' " [2] Mary Magdalene, the sinner of Capharnaum, rose up, burning with a greater love, already a saint. She had humbled herself in sorrow at the feet of the Saviour, and the Saviour had granted the forgiveness of her sins.

We, also, have sinned much, and we, also, must humble ourselves at the feet of our Redeemer. We too shall experience the same loving, tender mercy of the Saviour; we too may become saints.

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[1] Luke vii, 38.
[2] Luke vii, 48-50.

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE HEALING OF THE DEAF MUTE

"At that time, Jesus going out to the coasts of Tyre, came by Sidon to the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. And they bring to Him one deaf and dumb, and they besought Him that He would lay His hand upon him. And taking him from the multitude apart, He put His fingers into his ears, and spitting, He touched his tongue; and looking up to Heaven, he groaned and said to him, Ephpheta, that is, Be thou opened: and immediately his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke right. And He charged them that they should tell no man: but the more He charged them, so much the more a great deal did they publish it; and so much the more did they wonder, saying, He hath done all things well; He hath made both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak." Mark vii, 31-37.

JESUS is omnipotent. If, therefore, Jesus groans, it is not because of the difficulty of performing a miracle. He groans rather at the pitiful sight of fallen man, so horribly torn by sin. Man was not created thus; he was created strong and healthy, free from pain, full of grace and happiness.

This poor, unhappy deaf mute is, therefore, a faint picture of our fallen nature. After the sin of Adam, without the grace of God man is no longer capable of hearing the voice of the Lord. He cannot even pronounce a single word helpful to life

eternal; he cannot utter a single efficacious prayer. Wherefore Jesus groans at the wretched plight of man.

This miracle of the healing of the deaf mute is renewed in the Church every day in the sacrament of Baptism. The priest touches the ears of the one to be baptized, and in the name of Christ says, "Ephpheta," which is, "Be thou opened." Then with the salt of wisdom he sanctifies the tongue, that Satan may be renounced together with all his works and pomps. Then the priest pours the regenerating waters on the head of the one to be baptized, and original sin is washed away. The gates of Heaven are now open; the soul is on terms of intimate friendship with God.

After Baptism, one of the most horrible afflictions that can beset a soul is spiritual dumbness. The sinner closes his mouth and hides his sin from the minister of God. Thus he retains and increases the guilt on his soul. From this sacrilegious silence comes spiritual depravity. The soul does not care to turn itself to the Lord.

It is necessary that the good, in their charity, beseech Jesus and pray perseveringly for the deaf mute, that God may loosen his tongue, open his ears, and heal his soul.

* * *

King David had committed serious sins. God sent the prophet Nathan to him, who thus addressed him: "Thou hast killed Urias, the Hethite, with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife and hast slain him with the sword. . . . Therefore the

sword shall never depart from thy house, because thou hast despised Me." [1]

The king was overcome with grief and he passed much time in prayer and fasting. He has preserved his feelings of sorrow in a psalm that is most comforting to all repentant souls, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy. And according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out my iniquity. Wash me yet more from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. I know my iniquity and my sin is always before me. To Thee only have I sinned and done evil before Thee. . . . Turn away Thy face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities . . . Cast me not away from Thy face and take not Thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of my salvation, and strengthen me with a perfect spirit. . . . A contrite and humbled heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." [2]

And the Lord pardoned the sins of King David, although David was sentenced to endure severe temporal punishments.

Saint Augustine reminds the Christian who is ashamed to confess his sins that it is to God that he must tell them. Such a man attempts to conceal his sins from God, Who knows all things. We must therefore confess our sins. We should grieve for the offenses we have committed against God as King David repented his sins, and like David, we also shall be pardoned.

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[1] II Kings xii, 9, 10.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

"At that time, Jesus said to His disciples, Blessed are the eyes that see the things which you see. For I say to you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them; and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them. And behold a certain lawyer stood up, tempting Him, and saying, Master, what must I do to possess eternal life? But He said to him, What is written in the law? How readest thou? He answering, said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And He said to him, Thou hast answered rightly: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself (for asking the question), said to Jesus, And who is my neighbor? And Jesus answering, said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, who also stripped him, and having wounded him, went away, leaving him half dead: and it chanced that a certain (Jewish) priest went down the same way, and seeing him, passed by. In like manner also a Levite (minister in the temple), when he was near the place and saw him, passed by. But a certain Samaritan being on his journey, came near him, and seeing him, was moved with compassion; and going up to him, bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine; and, setting him upon his own beast, brought him to an inn, and took care of him: and the next day he took out two pence, and gave to the host, and said, Take care of him, and whatsoever thou shalt spend over and above, I, at my return,

will repay thee. Which of these three in thy opinion, was neighbor to him that fell among robbers? But he said, He that showed mercy to him. And Jesus said to him, Go, and do thou in like manner." Luke x, 23-37.

THE lawyer who with feigned reverence asked the Lord what it was necessary for him to do to possess eternal life, asked this question with the intention of ensnaring Jesus in His speech. He thought that Christ would give a direct answer to the question and thus explicitly assert His divinity. The malicious scribe would then accuse the Lord of blasphemy. Jesus confounded the questioner by obliging him to quote the precept of fraternal charity against himself at the very moment that he was breaking his precept. And when the scribe asked "Who is my neighbor?" [1] Jesus answered by proposing for his consideration the parable of the good Samaritan. And this parable, one of the most precious gems of the Gospel, has an important lesson for us.

Who is there who does not feel pity for this poor abandoned man, who had been beaten and robbed and left to die by the roadside?

And yet, the first one to harden his heart against him was the Jewish priest, the guardian of the law. He passed by on the opposite side of the street, scarcely deigning to glance at the unfortunate man. "In like manner also a Levite, when he was near the place and saw him, passed by." [2] There came finally to the place, a Samaritan, a member of a cursed and hated race. "My soul," says a Jewish proverb,

[1] Luke x, 29.
[2] Luke x, 32.

"detests the Idumeans and the Philistines, but it abominates the foolish people that dwell in Samaria." This Samaritan finds himself before one of his enemies in misfortune. He had come from a distance. He was tired and travel-stained, and a long journey was still before him. Nevertheless, his heart was touched with pity.

He dismounted, and with true charity knelt at the side of the wounded man, binding up his wounds as best he could. He placed him gently on his beast, and "brought him to an inn and took care of him." [1] He did not even then give up the care of the unfortunate wayfarer to others. He paid for the sufferer's lodging until he should return. He wished himself to have the consolation of helping him in his trouble. This was the Samaritan's idea of charity.

During a time such as that in which we have lived, in which man's hatred of man and man's selfishness has broken out in the most awful war that history records, it is well to reflect on the precept of Jesus; "that you love one another." [2] "As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me." [3]

Saint Gregory the Great welcomed pilgrims to Rome and received them into his monastery on the Celian Hill. On one occasion, he was startled to notice the figure of the Saviour among the pilgrims to whom he had given refuge and comfort.

Saint Martin, meeting a man benumbed with cold, took his cape from his shoulders, cut it in two pieces,

[1] Luke x, 34.
[2] John xiii, 34.
[3] Matthew xxv, 40.

and gave half of it to the stranger. That same night, Jesus, clothed in the same garment, appeared to Saint Martin saying, "It was I Whom you covered with this cloak."

Jesus, the Divine Samaritan, has infused His own Precious Blood into our souls. He has given Himself to us for our salvation. We ask Him in our daily prayers to "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." We should, therefore, forgive those who have done evil against us. We should help our neighbor, for to us as to the questioner in the Gospel Jesus presents the example of the good Samaritan. Jesus tells us also, "Go and do thou in like manner." [1]

[1] Luke x, 37.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE TEN LEPERS

"At that time, as Jesus was going to Jerusalem, He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee: and as He entered into a certain town, there met Him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off, and lifted up their voice, saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. Whom when He saw, He said, Go show yourselves to the priests. And it came to pass, as they went, they were made clean. And one of them, when he saw that he was made clean, went back, with a loud voice, glorifying God: and he fell on his face before His feet, giving thanks: and this was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering, said, Were not ten made clean? And where are the nine? There is no one found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger. And He said to him, Arise, go thy way; for thy faith hath made thee whole." Luke xvii, 11-19.

WHEN the ten lepers saw Jesus surrounded by the multitude approaching along the dusty road, they all rushed towards Him. The Saviour's heart was touched with compassion at the sight of their pitiful condition. They were covered with sores and ulcers, and because of the danger of contagion they were avoided by everyone. They were forbidden by law to approach anyone, and they were permitted to speak with a person only from a distance after covering their mouths, in order not to

contaminate the air. This isolation continued until death or until a priest had certified that they had been cured of leprosy.

Jesus wished to cure the ten lepers, and He said to them, " 'Go show yourselves to the priests.' And it came to pass, as they went, they were made clean." [1] Only one of them, however, showed any gratitude,—"And one of them, when he saw that he was made clean, went back with a loud voice glorifying God, and he fell on his face before His feet, giving thanks."[2] Nor was this man instructed in religion as were the other nine. He was a Samaritan, a poor, unlearned peasant from the most despised part of Palestine. Jesus said to him, "Arise, go thy way, for thy faith hath made thee whole." [3]

We are careful to express our appreciation to men for even the most trifling favors. Only to God, our greatest, truest Benefactor, are we ungrateful. How comparatively few of us there are who at the dawning of each day kneel in prayer to Him Who gives the day! Reawakening nature sings a hymn of acknowledgment and praise, but reawakening man, thinking of the world and its works, forgets "Who was the Workman." [4] Nine-tenths of the human race are ungrateful to God, and yet when we are in trouble we prostrate ourselves and implore mercy. Why, then, are we not thankful when we receive so many blessings?

God asks us to be grateful only for the good of our own souls. He cleansed the lepers from their bodily affliction and waited for them to return, that

[1] Luke xvii, 14.
[2] Luke xvii, 15, 16.
[3] Luke xvii, 19.
[4] Wisdom xiii, 1.

their souls also might be cleansed, but only one of them returned. United in misfortune, they had grieved and prayed together, but once in the possession of health and able to have a part in the world and the world's pleasures, nine of them forgot the miracle by which God had cured them. Only the Samaritan returned to give thanks and to receive grace.

There is danger of rendering useless the temporal favors which God bestows on us, and it is only because of His mercy that He sometimes deprives us of temporal possessions so that we may begin once more to pray, so that we may go once more to Him.

* * *

The Blessed Virgin Mary was the most favored creature of God, and she was also the most grateful. Her whole life was one continuous prayer. Greeted as the Mother of God, she sang that wondrous canticle of acknowledgment and of thanksgiving, the "Magnificat:" "My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Saviour, because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid. . . . Because He that is mighty hath done great things to me and holy is His name." [1]

In the preface of the Mass, just before the most solemn moment of consecration, the priest reminds himself and admonishes others: "It is truly meet and just, right and profitable, for us at all times and in all places to give thanks to Thee, O Lord, and we unite our voices with the voices of Heaven, singing unceasingly, Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Hosts. Hosanna in the highest!"

[1] Luke i, 46-49.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

FEAST OF THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

"At that time, Jesus said to the multitude of the Jews, Now is the judgment of the world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself. (Now this He said, signifying what death He should die.) The multitude answered Him, We have heard out of the law, that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest Thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? Who is the Son of man? Jesus therefore said to them, Yet a little while, the light is among you. Walk whilst you have the light, that the darkness overtake you not. And he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. Whilst you have the light, believe in the light; that you may be the children of light." John xii, 31-36.

LIBERATION from the yoke of Roman government and the establishment of a great national kingdom had long been the cherished hope of the Jewish people. They thought that the coming of the Messias indicated the achievement of a great military success followed by an equally great political triumph. The Jews were mistaken in this interpretation of the coming of the Messias. His triumphs were to be spiritual triumphs, not victories over men, but victories over Satan. The very title

of Son of Man which Jesus adopted instead of the title of King with which the crowd with much insistence saluted Him makes it very evident that He sought no worldly glory. Jesus is "the light of the world," [1] and the Gospel holds this Light aloft that we may see It and follow It. The Gospel reveals to us the nobility of sorrow and suffering, the sanctity of sacrifice for the love of God.

The victory which Jesus won was the sacrifice on Mount Calvary. It was not a victory of arms over the Roman legions, but a victory of humility and love over man's pride and Satan's hate. Jesus had conquered the powers of darkness, and the cross was the sign of man's salvation. From that time, down through the centuries, the Church has silently and majestically advanced. She has found many empires on her journey which today no longer exist. One after another, they have fallen, torn by the storm of war or corroded by the rust of time, but not one of them has been able to involve her in its ruin. The Church does not depend for her existence on the pride or the prowess of man, but on the cross of Christ, and, therefore, she does not fear.

There is an obelisk in Rome that stands in front of the Basilica of Saint Peter, which in ancient times was in the centre of the circus of Nero. This obelisk is now surmounted by a cross, and bears this triumphant inscription: "Christ conquers, Christ reigns, Christ rules." Every enemy that opposes Him must yield, because Christ and His Church shall endure forever.

In the cross and through the cross is our victory,

[1] John viii, 12.

and before the cross and about the cross should we frequently meditate. We should gaze on the thorn-pierced head of the Saviour, His body torn with scourges, and the wound of the lance in His side.

"My Lord," exclaimed Saint Francis of Assisi, kneeling before the crucifix, "I ask of Thee two graces. The first is that I may feel in my soul and in my body that pain which Thou, Sweet Saviour, endured on the cross; and the other grace which I implore is that I may feel in my heart the love for Thee which Thou hast for me." It was the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Suddenly, Mount Alvernia glowed with fire. The image of the crucified Jesus shining under the wings of a Seraphim appeared to Francis, and with vivid, burning rays pierced his hands, his feet and his heart, searing his flesh with the seal of the Divine Passion. The feast of the Stigmata or the wounds of Saint Francis of Assisi is observed on the seventeenth of September.

We must strive to have our love for Jesus in some small way resemble the love of Jesus for us. We should meditate frequently as did Saint Francis before the crucifix, that suffering for Jesus we may love Him ever more and more.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE WIDOW OF NAIM

"At that time, Jesus went into a city called Naim, and there went with Him His disciples, and a great multitude. And when He came nigh to the city, behold a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow, and much people of the city were with her. And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her, and said to her, Weep not. And He came near, and touched the bier. And they that carried it stood still. And He said, Young man, I say to thee, Arise: and he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother. And there came a fear on them all: and they glorified God, saying, A great prophet is risen up amongst us and God hath visited His people." Luke vii, 11-16.

"AND when He came nigh to the gate of the city, behold a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow, and a great multitude of the city was with her." [1] It was one of those scenes so common in the cities of the Orient, in which paid mourners take part in the funeral procession. But in their midst was one whose grief was no mere sham or affectation. The poor widowed mother, her heart torn with sorrow and her eyes blinded by tears, was following the body of her son to its final resting place. Jesus

[1] Luke vii, 12.

was coming nigh to the city, and His heart was moved with pity for the afflicted mother. He approached and said to her, " 'Weep not,' and He came near and touched the bier. And they that carried it stood still. And He said, 'Young man, I say to thee, arise.' And he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And He gave him to his mother." [1]

The Heart of Jesus did not know how to resist the prayers and pleadings of a mother for a lost son. When the woman of Canaan sought Him, imploring aid for her daughter possessed by the devil, she thus pleaded with Him: " 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil.' " [2] She did not ask mercy for her daughter, but mercy for herself. For the affliction of a child is a worse affliction for the mother. "Then Jesus answering said to her: 'O woman, great is thy faith; be it done to thee as thou wilt;' and her daughter was cured from that hour." [3]

Saint Monica suffered much sorrow because of the wanderings of her son, Augustine. One day, in search of comfort, she knelt in tears before the feet of a bishop and told him of her anxiety and of her prayers for her wayward son. The answer which the bishop gave her seemed to have been inspired,—"Woman, depart in peace; the child of such tears shall never perish." The prayers of Saint Monica were heard and Augustine became a saint. In later years, when Saint Augustine was meditating about his own conversion, and was thinking of his

[1] Luke vii, 13.
[2] Matthew xv, 22.
[3] Matthew xv, 28.

mother, Saint Monica, and of her influence in bringing him to God, he was reminded of the gospel story of the widow of Naim.

* * *

There is another sorrow-stricken mother whose story the Gospel records,—Mary the Mother of Jesus, Mary the Mother of us. It was for us that she suffered and prayed. There was not a single day on which she did not weep. From the cave in Bethlehem to the cross on Calvary, the time was for her one continued martyrdom. "To what shall I compare thee, or to what shall I liken thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? To what shall I equal thee that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Sion? For great as the sea is thy destruction." [1]

Mary was given to us to be our mother when Jesus was dying on the cross. She received us in her arms, children redeemed by the Precious Blood of her Divine Son, children, also, of her tears.

[1] Lamentations ii, 13.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

HUMILITY

"At that time, when Jesus went into the house of one of the chief of the Pharisees on the Sabbath-day to eat bread, they watched Him. And behold, there was a certain man before Him that had the dropsy: and Jesus answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath-day? But they held their peace. But He taking him, healed him, and sent him away. And answering them, He said, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fall into a pit, and will not immediately draw him out, on the sabbath-day? And they could not answer Him these things. And He spoke a parable also to them that were invited, marking how they chose the first seats at the table, saying to them, When thou art invited to a wedding, sit not down in the first place, lest perhaps one more honorable than thou be invited by him; and he that invited thee and him, come and say to thee, Give this man place; and then thou begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when thou art invited, go, sit down in the lowest place: that when he who inviteth thee cometh, he may say to thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have glory before them that sit at table with thee: because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Luke xiv, 1-11.

JESUS had answered the Pharisees, who had hypocritically affected to be scandalized because Christ performed a miracle on the Sabbath. He further rebuked them, "marking how they chose the

first seats at the table" [1] The parable of the wedding feast was a great lesson in humility for the Pharisees, and is today a great lesson in humility for us. "Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." [2] It is necessary at all times and in all places, therefore, for the true disciple of Christ to choose the lowest place. For just as pride is inordinate self-esteem, so humility is the virtue by which we see ourselves in the proper light. Our proper place is the lowest place, and this truth is most consoling for those who are following Christ.

"What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" [3] All comes from God. A few years ago, we did not exist; and since we have obtained existence, we owe it to Him Who called us out of nothing. The body of which we take great care, the strength of which we boast, the genius of which we are proud, are all gifts of God. Reflect, therefore, that if we are more fortunate than others because of the gifts which we have received, we are also more deeply indebted to the Creator on account of these gifts. The more that God has given, the more shall He require. "God resisteth the proud, but to the humble He giveth grace." [4]

When Saint Augustine was asked the chief Christian virtue, he replied, "The first is humility, the

[1] Luke xiv, 7.
[2] Luke xiv, 11.
[3] I Corinthians iv, 7.
[4] I Peter v, 5.

second is humility, and the third is humility, because this virtue is the foundation of all the others."

* * *

Aloysuis Gonzaga, Marquis of Castiglione, renounced his rights as the first born son of his house, to enter the religious life. He chose for himself the most worn-out clothing, and undertook with joy the most menial tasks. On the occasion of a visit which he made to his uncle, the most sumptuous apartments were prepared for him. When he was left alone with his companion, Aloysius uttered these words of regret: "My good brother, what have our sins brought us to this night! How much better would we be in our humble cells!"

We, too, must seek the lowest place, and we shall know how sweet it is to merge our life into the life of Christ. We, too, shall hear some day the celestial music of that voice, "Friend, go up higher." [1]

[1]Luke xiv, 10.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE FEAST OF THE SOLEMNITY OF THE HOLY ROSARY

THE LOVE OF GOD

"At that time, the Pharisees came to Jesus, and one of them, a doctor of the law, asked Him, tempting Him, Master, which is the great commandment of the law? Jesus said to him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets (all revelation). And the Pharisees being gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think you of Christ; Whose son is He? They say to Him, David's. He saith to them, How then doth David, in spirit, call Him Lord; saying (in Psalm 109) The Lord said to My Lord, Sit on My right hand until I make Thy enemies Thy footstool? If David then call Him Lord, how is He his son? And no man was able to answer Him a word; neither durst any man, from that day forth, ask Him any more questions." Matthew xxii, 35-46.

THIS passage from the Gospel tells of one of the many attempts which the Pharisees made to ensnare Jesus. "'Master, which is the great commandment in the law?'" [1] was the ques-

[1] Matthew xxii, 36.

tion asked by the Pharisee in the hope that Jesus would substitute in His answer the adoration of Himself for the adoration of God. But Jesus read the thought in the mind of His questioner. He knew that the Pharisees hated Him, that they had persecuted Him, that they refused to recognize His divine nature, that they closed their eyes to His miracles. He answered the question by recalling to the minds of the Pharisees the precept of charity towards one's neighbor, a precept which they rarely observed. He silenced them by indicating that David, the greatest King of Israel, had recognized the Messias as his Lord. The dignity of Christ is therefore above the dignity of all men, above even the dignity of kings. The dignity of Christ blends into and is actually the dignity of God Himself.

The most salutary lesson of this gospel is contained in the great commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind." [1] Since God is all perfect, the greatest, the most merciful of all beings, the inexhaustible Fountain of Goodness, why should we not love Him? All those who love us have received from Him the heart by means of which they love. Our fathers have obtained from Him the life which they have given to us. " 'I know not how you were formed in my womb,' " exclaimed the mother of the seven martyred Machabees, " 'for I neither gave you breath, nor soul, nor life, neither did I frame the limbs of every one of you.' "[2] And then, whispering to the smallest of her heroes, she

[1] Matthew xxii, 37.
[2] II Machabees vii, 22.

murmured, "'I beseech thee, my son, look upon Heaven and earth, and all that is in them: and consider that God made them out of nothing, and mankind also. So thou shalt not fear this tormentor, but being made a worthy partner with thy brethren, receive death, that in that mercy I may receive thee again with thy brethren.' "[1]

We are indeed so poor, so small and insignificant that if God had not directed us to love Him, it would have seemed presumptuous to have said, "My God, I love Thee." The venerable Aloysius Da Ponte could not understand the expression, "to love God above all things." It seemed to him the same as saying, "Lord, I love Thee more than a wisp of straw, more than a grain of dust."

We should therefore love God with all our heart. We should love Him with the greatest love. "The measure for our love of God," writes Saint Bernard, "is to love Him without measure."

We should remember how much God has loved us. For us, He became man; for us, He died on the cross.

We should meditate frequently on the mysteries of this love, the mysteries of the rosary. The lips pronounce the "Our Father" and the "Hail Mary"; the mind dwells on the principal mysteries of the life of Jesus and the life of Mary. At the thought of their sacrifice for us, the heart warms and the eyes fill with tears.

We are all familiar with the efficacy of the rosary, which was recommended to Saint Dominic by the Blessed Virgin herself. One of the great graces

[1] II Machabees vii, 28, 29.

obtained through the recitation of this prayer and the event which was the occasion of the institution of the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary occurred on the seventh day of October in the year 1571. While the members of the Confraternity of the Rosary recited this prayer to the Mother of God to save the world from the yoke of Moslem power, the galleys of the Christian forces met and decisively defeated the Turkish armada in the great battle of Lepanto.

Recite the Rosary once each day and offer it as a garland of roses to the Madonna. Remember that all your dear ones have been laid in the grave with their hands entwined with a rosary. "Send forth flowers as the lily," sings the Church today, "bring forth leaves in grace, and praise with canticles, and bless the Lord in His works." [1]

[1]Communion prayer in Mass of the Rosary quoting Ecclesiasticus xxxix, 19.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE PARALYTIC OF CAPHARNAUM

"At that time, Jesus entering into a ship, passed over the water and came into His own city. And behold they brought to Him one sick of the palsy lying in a bed; and Jesus seeing their faith, said to the man sick of the palsy, Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee. And behold some of the scribes said within themselves, He blasphemeth. And Jesus seeing their thoughts said, Why do you think evil in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven Thee; or to say, Arise and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then said He to the man sick of the palsy), Arise, take up they bed, and go into thy house. And he arose, and went into his house. And the multitude seeing it, feared, and glorified God Who had given such power to men." Matthew ix, 1-8.

JESUS had returned to Capharnaum after a visit to the neighboring towns and cities, where He had preached and wrought many miracles. "And behold they brought to Him one sick of palsy lying in a bed. And Jesus seeing their faith, said to the man sick of the palsy, 'Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee.'" [1] The Gospel of Saint Mark gives other details of this occurrence: "It

[1] Matthew ix, 2.

was heard that He was in the house and many came together so that there was no room; no, not even at the door. . . . And they came to Him bringing one sick of the palsy, who was carried by four." [1] This poor paralytic was late in arriving at the house, and the four persons who were carrying him were unable to make their way through the throng about the entrance. In the rear of the low structure, according to the custom, an outside stairway led to the terrace. It was easy for them to climb this stairway and to uncover an opening in the roof. And "they let down the bed wherein the man sick of the palsy lay." [2] The poor cripple trembled with emotion before the feet of Jesus. He realized full well the causes of his illness. He knew that sinful excesses had brought him to this condition. He was sorry now, and although he was unable to utter a word with his lips, his whole being pleaded for mercy and forgiveness. Jesus read the message in that desolate heart and Jesus answered the message: "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee." [3] Then, in order to show that He had power to forgive sins, in order to confound the scribes who would accuse Him of blasphemy, Jesus said to the paralytic, "Arise, take up thy bed and go into thy house." [4] The thrill of life coursed once more through his poor dead limbs, "and immediately, he arose, and taking up his bed, went his way in the sight of all, so that all wondered and glorified God." [5] Christ had proved that He had power

[1] Mark ii, 2, 3.
[2] Mark ii, 4.
[3] Matthew ix, 2.
[4] Matthew ix, 6.
[5] Mark ii, 12.

to forgive sins, because God witnessed by a miracle the truth of Christ's claim, and God could never confirm the truth of a lie. It is a far greater miracle to give back grace to a soul in sin than to restore health to a body that is sick.

This great miracle is renewed today in the sacrament of Penance, for there is no sinner, however grievously he may have offended, from whom mercy will be withheld, if that sinner will only repent. "The earth is full of the mercy of the Lord," [1] says the psalmist. "Return to Me, saith the Lord, and I will receive thee." [2] The sinner may hear if he wishes the words of Jesus to the paralytic, "thy sins are forgiven thee." [3] When the priest pronounces the words of absolution in the sacrament of Penance, he represents God Himself. As you would confide in Jesus, so also confide in your confessor. The priest is the consecrated minister of God and has received the power to forgive sins in God's name. "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." [4] The greatest comfort which you can have after you have sinned is to humble yourself at the feet of God's minister and pour out to him the secret cause of your grief. Unburden to him the bitterness of your remorse, and there will be joy among the angels for the sheep that returns to the fold.

* * *

A celebrated professor in the University of Pavia,

[1] Psalm xxxii, 5.
[2] Jeremias iii, 1.
[3] Matthew ix, 2.
[4] John xx, 23.

Contardo Ferrini, who died a few years ago, after a saintly life, attributed the peace of mind which he enjoyed to the faithful observance of pious Christian practices. "I cannot conceive," he wrote, "how a man can live a life without prayer. I cannot imagine a person who would not offer his first thoughts on awakening to God, or a person who would retire at night without making peace with Him who is one day to be his Judge." Ferrini attended daily Mass and went frequently to Confession and Communion. He possessed an untroubled conscience and looked always serenely towards death,—"O, cherished moment of peacefully falling asleep in the Lord. O, happy moment, the first embrace of the Saviour."

If thou, Christian soul, desirest to be at peace with thyself, go frequently to Confession. Have thy sins forgiven in the tribunal of mercy, before God calls thee to the tribunal of justice.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE MARRIAGE FEAST

"At that time, Jesus spoke to the chief priests and the pharisees in parables, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king, who made a marriage for his son; and he sent his servants, to call them that were invited to the marriage, and they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying, Tell them that were invited, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my beeves and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come ye to the marriage. But they neglected: and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise; and the rest laid hands on his servants, and having treated them contumeliously, put them to death. But when the king had heard of it, he was angry; and sending his armies, he destroyed those murderers, and burnt their city. Then he saith to his servants, The marriage indeed is ready, but they that were invited were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as you shall find, call to the marriage. And his servants, going forth into the ways, gathered together all that they found, both bad and good; and the marriage was filled with guests. And the king went in to see the guests; and he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment: and he saith to him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment? But he was silent. Then the king said to the waiters, Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen." Matthew xxii, 2-14.

THE banquet hall is resplendent with lights and decorations. The servants are in their places; the feast is ready. In the adjoining rooms, the white tunics are at hand which, according to the oriental custom, the king has prepared for his guests. Meanwhile, the messengers charged with the delivery of the invitations to the marriage feast return breathless from their mission. They had been insulted, derided and attacked. Nevertheless, the banquet will take place.

"Go ye therefore into the highways," cries the king, "and as many as you shall find call to the marriage." [1] And the crowd responded to the invitation, "and the marriage was filled with guests. And the king went in to see the guests; and he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment." [2]

The Great King is God, and the meaning of the parable is clear. From the day on which God promised a Redeemer for the human race, until the day when the sun will shine for the last time in the heavens, He calls men to enter the kingdom which He has established on this earth. The number who refuse His invitation is very large. The chosen people, who killed the prophets and crucified Christ, were among the most ungrateful. Wherefore the arm of God struck them, and the legions of imperial Rome laid waste their country. Then was opened to the Gentiles an era of mercy, and our people were received in throngs into the Church. But many of these souls there are, however, who do not answer the call of

[1] Matthew xxii, 9.
[2] Matthew xxii, 10, 11.

God. Jesus warns us that in proportion to the multitude that are called, only a "few are chosen." [1]

In the sacrament of baptism we receive the white garment of grace, but in order to preserve this treasure we must wage a continuous battle. "The life of man upon earth is a warfare," says the Scriptures,[2] and the Fathers of the Church add the comment that every day is a day of strife, and that victory is most difficult.

Saint Jerome passed long years in penance, and yet he saw his solitudes inhabited by phantom images of cities even though he dwelt alone in the desert. Blessed is he who in a war so fierce and bitter preserves his soul untarnished by sin and keeps his thoughts fixed on Heaven.

The shadows of life's close are deepening fast. Neither our presence in a banquet hall, nor our attendance in a church, will exempt us from judgment; for, in a short time we shall hear the blare of the trumpet, and it is the King Who comes. "Wherefore," the Apostle concludes, "with fear and trembling work out your salvation." [3]

We are walking through clouds of dust; all about us is contamination. We must remember that we are clothed in white.

Even though the battle rages furiously, no one should lose heart. "Put you on the armor of God," exhorts Saint Paul, "that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil." [4] Whoever, there-

[1] Matthew xx, 16.
[2] Job vii, 1.
[3] Philippians ii, 12.
[4] Ephesians vi, 11.

fore, wishes salvation and works for salvation will receive salvation.

* * *

Nabuchodonosor, King of Babylon, raised up a majestic idol. On the day of its dedication, when it was unveiled, the colossal statue gleamed with wondrous splendor. A great multitude of governors, magistrates, soldiers and people prostrated themselves in adoration before it. Only three Hebrew youths of the royal court refused to offer worship to the idol. The King was angry at their refusal, and cried out, "Who is the God that shall deliver you out of my hand?" [1] And they rejoined, " 'we will not worship thy gods, nor adore the golden statue which thou hast set up.' Then was Nabuchodonosor filled with fury; . . . and he commanded that the furnace should be heated seven times more than it had been accustomed to be heated. And he commanded the strongest men that were in his army . . . to cast them into the furnace of burning fire." [2] But the fire did not harm them. "They walked in the midst of the flame, praising God and blessing the Lord; 'Blessed art Thou, O Lord the God of our fathers; and thy name is worthy of praise, and glorious forever.' " [3]

O Christian, surrounded by a multitude of the weak, live the life of the strong and the fire will not harm you. Thus does the Church pray: "O God, Who for the three youths in the fiery furnace didst mitigate the power of the flames, grant that we Thy servants may not be burned by the flames of vice."

[1] Daniel iii, 15.
[2] Daniel iii, 18-20.
[3] Daniel iii, 24-26.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

PERSEVERANCE IN PRAYER

"At that time, there was a certain ruler whose son was sick at Capharnaum. He having heard that Jesus was come from Judea into Galilee, went to Him, and prayed Him to come down (to Capharnaum) and heal his son; for he was at the point of death. Jesus therefore said to him, Unless you see signs and wonders, you believe not. The ruler saith to Him, Lord, come down before that my son die. Jesus saith to him, Go thy way, thy son liveth. The man believed the word which Jesus said to him, and went his way. And as he was going down, his servants met him, and they brought word, saying, that his son lived. He asked therefore of them the hour wherein he grew better. And they said to him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. The father therefore knew that it was at the same hour that Jesus said to him, Thy son liveth; and himself believed, and his whole house." John iv, 46-53.

THE Prophet has returned! The joyful news thrills the rough soldier who for several nights has watched at the bedside of his son. Jesus will save his dying boy, and the face of the father lights with gladness at the thought. A moment later and he is riding over the dusty highroad which from the Lake of Liberius mounts towards the higher plain. The new hope in his heart struggles to overcome the grief which weighs him down. He

arrives at the gates of Cana, and makes his way through the throng that surrounds the Master. Kneeling at the feet of Jesus, he pleads for the life of his loved one.

The answer of the Saviour is a reproof to those who do not believe, and yet in the time of trouble desire miracles. "Unless you see signs and wonders, you believe not." [1] But the sorrow of the warrior had made him repentant, had made him humble. He persevered in his supplication "and saith to Him: 'Lord come down before that my son die.' Jesus saith to him, 'Go thy way, thy son liveth.' " [2]

The ruler did not know that Jesus could perform miracles at a distance. Nevertheless, he "believed the word which Jesus said to him, and went his way." [3] The soldier of Herod had become the soldier of Christ.

Courageous faithful souls do not lose confidence in the midst of uncertainties and difficulties. They believe that through the darkness the light will once more shine. They do not know at what point on the horizon the ray of sunlight will appear; they may not understand in just what manner God will turn their sorrows into blessings, but nevertheless, they trust in His goodness.

Many persons indeed there are who become discouraged because they think that their prayers are not answered. And yet God hears and answers their prayers. Only on the last day, when God will reveal the mysteries of each life, will they know the graces

[1] John iv, 48.
[2] John iv, 49, 50.
[3] John iv, 50.

which have been bestowed in answer to their prayers. Saint Augustine tells us that if what we ask with humble perseverance be not a "knife or a sword," we may be certain that we shall receive it. Adversity and continued adversity, far from making us irresolute, should make us more steadfast in prayer.

* * *

It is recorded in the eighth chapter of the Gospel of Saint Matthew that on one occasion when Jesus was in a boat with his disciples, "a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the boat was covered with waves." [1] Jesus was asleep, and the disciples were filled with terror at the fury of the storm. "And they came to Him, and awaked Him, saying, 'Lord, save us, we perish.' " [2] Jesus reproached them for their lack of confidence, and said to them, " 'Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith?' Then rising up, He commanded the winds and the sea, and there came a great calm." [3] It is necessary not only to have faith, but to have great faith.

On another occasion, on the same sea, Jesus gave us another lesson in faith. This story is also told in the Gospel of Saint Matthew, in the fourteenth chapter. The disciples were in a boat tossed about by the waves. "And in the fourth watch of the night, He (Jesus) came to them walking upon the sea. And they seeing Him . . . were troubled, saying, 'It is an apparition.' And they cried out for fear. And immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'Be of

[1] Matthew viii, 24.
[2] Matthew viii, 25.
[3] Matthew viii, 26.

good heart; it is I, fear ye not.' And Peter making answer, said, 'Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come to Thee upon the waters.' And He said, 'Come.' And Peter going down out of the boat, walked upon the water to come to Jesus. But seeing the wind strong, he was afraid: and when he began to sink, he cried out, saying, 'Lord, save me.' And immediately Jesus stretching forth His hand took hold of him, and said to him, 'O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?' " [1]

Therefore, we should not fear. Jesus is in our midst, even though at times He may appear to us to be sleeping. All about the Church, a stormy sea is surging. Many there are, and many there have been, who have announced that the Church is about to be engulfed. They were mistaken in the past, and they are mistaken now. But we, the children of the Church, should have confidence, we should have faith, we should redouble our prayers and supplications. With great faith and with great love, we shall join our prayers with the prayers of the Church. "Incline Thy ear and hear; open, O Lord, Thy eyes and see." [2]

FEAST OF ALL SAINTS

THE WAY TO PARADISE

"At that time, Jesus seeing the multitudes, went up into a mountain; and when He was sat down, His disciples came unto Him. And opening His mouth, He taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom

[1] IV Kings xix, 16.
[2] Matthew xiv, 25-31.

of heaven. Blessed are the meek; for they shall possess the land. Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice; for they shall have their fill. Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart; for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice's sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for My sake: be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven." Matthew v, 1-12.

IN the twenty-first chapter of the Apocalypse, Saint John describes the "Holy City, the new Jerusalem." [1] Guided by divine inspiration, the Prophet Apostle reveals something of the magnificence and grandeur of "the tabernacle of God with men." [2] "God shall wipe away all tears . . . and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow." [3] "And the city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon, to shine in it. For the glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof. . . . And the gates thereof shall not be shut by day, for there shall be no night there. . . . There shall not enter into it any thing defiled, or that worketh abomination or maketh a lie, but they that are written in the book of life of the Lamb." [4] "And they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads, . . . the Lord God shall enlighten them, and they shall reign for ever and ever." [5]

[1] Apocalypse xxi, 2.
[2] Apocalypse xxi, 3.
[3] Apocalypse xxi, 4.
[4] Apocalypse xxi, 23-27.
[5] Apocalypse xxii, 4, 5.

The thought of this vision described by Saint John should be in every mind today, for between the Church on earth and the Church in Heaven there is no division, but rather a continuation of one into the other. Militant or triumphant, it is the one same Church. It is as a giant tree in the earthly abyss of human grief, with its top in the tranquil blue of Heaven.

The trials and troubles which we endure today are but a preparation for the joys of tomorrow.

When Pharao asked the Patriarch Jacob how old he was, the Egyptian ruler received this answer, "The days of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years,—few and evil." [1] The present life is therefore only a pilgrimage, a passage to eternity. Suffering is the lot of all. It is true that there is frequently a smile on the faces of the wicked, but this smile is but a mask poorly concealing the bitterness of their desolation. And through the mist of the tears of the good may be seen the shining of the first rays of Heaven's light. We must not deceive ourselves. In this life, hell is pleasure without God, and Heaven is suffering for Jesus. Woe to those who smile; blessed are those who weep. For there is only one way to Heaven,—the way of the cross. This way becomes sweet, says Saint Teresa, when the Christian traverses it with joy. A starry sky is above our heads, but briers and thorns are at our feet. The grace of God sustains us in our struggles against the world and the flesh. Every time that we reject God's grace and yield to sin, we forge fetters which bind us to earth. We must throw off these

[1] Genesis xlvii, 9.

fetters once and for all. Blessed will be the moment when we win this great victory. Blessed are the tears which reopen for us the gates of Paradise.

* * *

In the thirty-eighth chapter of the Prophecy of Isaias, we read that King Ezechias "was sick even to death." [1] And the Lord said to him through the mouth of the prophet, "Take order with thy house, for thou shalt die and not live." [2] These words of the great prophet have also a meaning for us. We have been witnesses of the most awful war that history records. We have seen the flower of the world's manhood crushed in untimely, cruel death. This thought should make us mindful of our own passing from this world, and we, too, must put our house in order that we may be prepared to meet our Judge. The saints are watching us and praying for us. All of our dear departed loved ones are deeply solicitous for us who are yet in exile, hoping that we shall join them in their Heavenly home. May the Lord grant to us sinners who trust in His tender mercies the forgiveness of our many sins! May we enjoy in the life to come the happiness of the Apostles and martyrs, the happiness of Saint Stephen, of Saint Cecilia and Saint Agnes, the happiness of all the saints! May we be with them in the City of God, partaking in the reward which they are enjoying, not because of our merits, but because of God's infinite mercy!

[1] Isaias xxxviii, 1.
[2] Isaias xxxviii, 1.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

"At that time, Jesus spoke to His disciples this parable: The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king, who would take an account of his servants. And when he had begun to take the account, one was brought to him that owed him ten thousand talents: and as he had not wherewith to pay it, his lord commanded that he should be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. But that servant falling down, besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And the lord of that servant, being moved with pity, let him go; and forgave him the debt. But when that servant was gone out, he found one of his fellow-servants that owed him a hundred pence: and laying hold of him, he throttled him, saying, Pay what thou owest. And his fellow-servant falling down besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not; but went and cast him into prison till he paid the debt. Now his fellow-servants, seeing what was done, were very much grieved; and they came and told their lord all that was done. Then his lord called him, and saith to him, Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest me; shouldst not thou then have had compassion also on thy fellow-servant, even as I had compassion on thee? And his lord being angry, delivered him to the torturers until he paid all the debt. So also shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts." Matthew xviii, 23-25.

GOD has been merciful to us, and we in turn should be merciful and generous in our remembrances of the faithful departed.

All of us are debtors to God. Many times our sins have been forgiven. As we, therefore, implored mercy of God, so should we be merciful in praying for our dear ones who are no longer able to help themselves. Only through the charity of the living can the sufferings of the souls in purgatory be shortened; only through our suffrages can they more quickly draw near to the throne of God. If we deafen our ears to their pleadings, if we chill our hearts to their pains, if we do not show them mercy, we shall not please God Who has been all merciful to us.

When the soul leaving the body breaks the bonds of earth and enters eternity, it springs with all the power of its being towards God Who gave it life. If, however, all the punishment due to sin has not been entirely remitted, the soul cannot yet see God. The enjoyment of the Beatific Vision, the possession of Eternal Happiness is denied to the soul until the last stain of sin or of its consequences has been removed.

Whoever has endured the martyrdom of exile, whoever has suffered the hunger of loneliness, can imagine in some infinitesimally small degree the bitterness of the pain of separation of a loving soul from God. And we who are yet on probation, we who as yet have experienced nothing but the mercy of God, are slow to realize that we shall soon need the Masses, penances and prayers of others when God's mercy ends for us and the justice of God

begins. We shall wish for others to help us then; we should, therefore, help our departed brethren now.

The cemetery is really not a city of the dead, for the souls of those who lie therein are in communion with us who live apart. Mothers, do not weep for your children, for they are not dead but sleepeth! Children, do not grieve for your parents, for you still may help them, and you shall see them once more! "Be not sorrowful as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them who have slept with Jesus will God bring with Him." [1] The word which Jesus pronounced when Lazarus was dead cannot fail: "'Lazarus, our friend, sleepeth.'" [2] The dead sleep. Wherefore the Church calls the place of their repose "cemetery," which means dormitory or resting place.

The echo of the desolation in pagan hearts at the thought of death still reaches our ears through the inscriptions on their monuments. That was a time when the dead buried their dead. There was nothing beyond the grave. The religion of Christ appeared, and all was changed. The inscriptions which may still be seen in the catacombs radiated with the light of hope and happiness,—"Rest in peace with the angels," "Live in Christ." The palms of victory over death and the symbols of life eternal that were depicted centuries ago on the walls of the catacombs can be seen to this day. The very tombs of the martyrs became altars to God.

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[1] I Thessalonians iv, 12-13.
[2] John xi, 11.

In the second book of Machabees, it is narrated that after the taking of Jamnia, Judas, the hero of his people, collected the bodies of the fallen and buried them in their own land near the graves of their valiant ancestors who were sleeping their last sleep, awaiting the resurrection. And since they had "fallen asleep with godliness," [1] so that, therefore, there was hope for their salvation, he received offerings from his soldiers, and sent twelve thousand drachmas of silver to Jerusalem for expiatory sacrifice in their behalf. "It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought," concludes the chapter, "to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins." [2] The Church remembers this teaching, and every day in offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, she prays for the faithful departed, including those whom the living have already forgotten. "Mercifully remember, O Lord," prays the Church through her priests at the altar, "remember the souls of Thy servants who have gone before us with the sign of faith and repose with Christ in peace, and grant to all an abode of refreshment, the beatitude of rest, and the brightness of light."

[1] II Machabees xii, 45.
[2] II Machabees xii, 46.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE TRIBUTE TO CAESAR

"At that time, the Pharisees went and consulted among themselves how to ensnare Jesus in His speech. And they send to Him their disciples, with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that Thou art a true speaker, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest Thou for any man, for Thou dost not regard the person of men. Tell us therefore, what dost Thou think? Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not? But Jesus knowing their wickedness, said, Why do you tempt me, ye hypocrites? Show Me the coin of the tribute. And they offered Him a penny. And Jesus saith to them, Whose image and superscription is this? They say to Him, Cæsar's. Then He saith to them, Render therefore to Cæsar, the things that are Cæsar's, and to God, the things that are God's." Matthew xxii, 15-21.

THE snare set by the Pharisees to entrap Jesus was cunningly planned. They thought that if Jesus recommended the payment of tribute to the Romans, He would bring down on Himself the anger of the people, who hated the invading oppressor. If, on the other hand, He forbade payment, the partisans of Herod would be quick to rise up against Him. Eternal Wisdom, however, sees through the plots of men. Jesus first unmasked their hypocrisy; then He confused and confounded them. "Knowing their wickedness, He said, 'Why

do you tempt Me, ye hypocrites? Show Me the coin of the tribute.' And they offered Him a penny." [1] The coin, similar to those which may be seen now in museums, bore the effigy of the Roman emperor with the inscription, "Augustus Tiberius Cæsar." "Jesus saith to them, 'Whose image and inscription is this?' They say to Him, 'Cæsar's.' Then He saith to them, 'Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and to God the things that are God's.' " [2] Tertullian succinctly comments on this answer of Jesus, "Render the gold to Cæsar, the heart to God."

It is necessary not only to acknowledge the sovereignty of God, but also to submit willingly to the will of God. This voluntary submission is indicated in the Old Testament by the sacrifice of lambs and other animals, which typified the supreme dominion of the Creator over life and death. But Jesus does not wish the blood of sacrificial victims. He wishes the souls of men. When He entered the Holy City, He was not accompanied in His triumph by the military escort of a conqueror; He entered amid the loving smiles of happy children strewing flowers in His pathway and waving olive branches in glad acclaim.

Jesus is the King of love. He wishes dominion over the hearts and souls of men. And yet men hate this King of love, this King Who has loved them even unto the death on the cross. They should remember, however, that some day mercy will end and justice shall begin.

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[1] Matthew xxii, 18, 19.
[2] Matthew xxii, 20, 21.

On the morning of the day on which Christ was crucified, the leaders of the chosen people were assembled before the Antonian tower, from which Pilate had harangued the mob. The Jews resented what Pilate said to them about Jesus, " 'Behold your King,' " [1] and they had cried out, " 'Away with Him, crucify Him . . . we have no king but Cæsar.' " [2] " 'His blood be upon us and upon our children.' " [3] And their defiance merited a terrible retribution. The yoke of Rome and the armies of Titus were the answers of God to punish the Jewish nation in the most awful siege which history records. Eleven hundred thousand Jews perished in the fall of Jerusalem, and ninety-seven thousand were condemned to slavery and dispersion.

And now many of the Christian nations have experienced something of divine retribution, and society is inviting still more frightful punishment by its continued and increasing apostasy. Grant that every wandering soul, that every wandering nation, may return to Jesus to offer a tribute of love, instead of one day paying a tribute of justice.

To the One, Only, Immortal God, be always honor and glory in time and in eternity.

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[1] John xix, 14.
[2] John xix, 14, 15.
[3] Matthew xxvii, 25.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS

"At that time, as Jesus was speaking to the multitudes, behold a certain ruler came up, and adored Him, saying, Lord, my daughter is even now dead; but come lay Thy hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus, rising up, followed him with His disciples. And behold a woman, who was troubled with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind Him, and touched the hem of His garment. For she said within herself, If I shall touch only His garment, I shall be healed. But Jesus turning and seeing her, said, Be of good heart, daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour. And when Jesus was come into the house of the ruler, and saw the minstrels and the multitude making a tumult, He said, Give place, for the girl is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed Him to scorn. And when the multitude was put forth, He went in, and took her by the hand. And the maid arose. And the fame hereof went abroad into all that country." Matthew ix, 18-26.

WE learn more details of the miracle which Jesus performed when He raised to life the daughter of the ruler from the Gospels of Saint Mark and Saint Luke. The dead child was twelve years of age. Her father was the head of one of the synagogues of Capharnaum and was called Jairus. When our Lord entered into the house of the

ruler, the courtyard was thronged with a crowd of people who were indulging in most noisy demonstrations. Hired mourners were wailing and minstrels were playing sad melodies, without any indication, however, of genuine grief.

Let us enter with Jesus, and approach the body of the dead girl. What a thing is life! What a terrible thing is death!

Life is as a light cloud veiling for a moment the sky of summer and dissolved in a moment by the sun. Death certainly comes quickly. As the years which have gone by have melted away in the past, so will vanish also the fleeting years which remain. It makes no difference if we delude ourselves that the road on which we are advancing does not seem to have an end, we shall find some day, and possibly some day soon, that the end has come abruptly.

Even the pagans considered the truth, the bitter, inflexible, unfailing truth, that all must die. "The whole life of a philosopher," says Cicero in his Tusculan Disputations, "is a consideration of death." Youth, passions, smiles, shall all fade away and disappear.

When Saint Sylvester, who was a knight of noble blood, gazed into the coffin of a friend and meditated on the appearance of the cold, inanimate form of him who but a short time before was the idol of all his companions, Sylvester received a striking lesson. In the silence of his soul he seemed to hear a voice, "He has been what you are now; soon you will be as you see him in death." Sylvester learned the lesson of the shallowness of human achievement and

the vanity of worldly honors. He changed his life, fled into solitude and became a saint.

The last chapter of the inspired book of Ecclesiastes has this grave warning: "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the time of affliction come, and the years draw nigh of which thou shalt say: 'They please me not.' . . . And the dust return into its earth, from whence it was, and the spirit return to God, who gave it. Vanity of vanities, and all things are vanity. . . . Fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is all man." [1]

These thoughts should not make us sad, because to the true Christian the thought of death is not a bitter one. Jesus has made it easy for us to die by His own death on the cross. The Christian soul looks forward to the loosening of earthly bonds and the union with Jesus in Heaven. Saint Francis called death his sister. Saint Ambrose wrote a book on the blessings of death, and he ended it with this cry: "Let us hasten to life!"

During our term of exile, Jesus often approaches us. We are permitted to do more than to touch the hem of His garment, more than to press Him by the hand, for in Holy Communion we possess Him entirely. And we have that most consoling of all His promises: "He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day." [1]

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[1]Ecclesiastes xii.
[2]John vi, 55.

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE GENERAL JUDGMENT

"At that time, Jesus said to His disciples, When you shall see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place; (he that readeth, let him understand): then they that are in Judea, let them flee to the mountains; and he that is on the house-top, let him not come down to take anything out of his house; and he that is in the field, let him not go back to take his coat. And woe to them that are with child, and that give suck, in those days. But pray that your flight be not in the winter, or on the Sabbath (because the law forbade traveling on the Sabbath): for there shall be then great tribulation, such as has not been found from the beginning of the world until now, neither shall be: and unless those days had been shortened, no flesh should be saved; but for the sake of the elect, those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; do not believe him. For there shall arrive false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch as to deceive (if possible) even the elect. Behold, I have told it to you beforehand: if they therefore shall say to you, Behold, He is in the desert, go ye not out; behold, He is in the closets, believe it not. For as lightning cometh out of the east, and appeareth even into the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Wheresoever the body shall be, there shall the eagles also be gathered together. And immediately after the tribulation of those days, the

sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be moved; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty: and He shall send His angels with a trumpet and a great voice and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest parts of the heavens to the utmost bounds of them. And from the fig-tree learn a parable: when the branch thereof is now tender, and the leaves comes forth, you know that summer is nigh. So you also, when you shall see all these things, know ye that it is nigh even at the doors. Amen I say to you, that this generation shall not pass till all these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." Matthew xxiv, 15-35.

JESUS refers to the fall of Jerusalem and to the destruction of the temple. He is speaking to the people who are about to commit the greatest sin possible, the sin of deicide, the murder of God. In punishment of this crime, the Jewish people are to be the victims of the most atrocious tragedy which the annals of antiquity record. One million, one hundred thousand of them are to be slaughtered, struck down by fire or famine, or by the weapons of the merciless legions of Rome. "No other city," exclaims Josephus Flavius, the historian of the epoch, "no other city ever suffered such tribulation." And yet the destruction of Jerusalem with all its horror appears to the Saviour as but a pale picture compared with the destruction which will take place at the end of the world. In order that every Christian may meditate on the end of human destiny, on the

terrible judgment by God, the Church enjoins the consideration of this Gospel on the last Sunday of the ecclesiastical year.

With the rapidity of lightning, in the heights of infinite space will gleam the Cross resplendent, and in the midst of a host of angels Christ in all His majesty will appear triumphant. The immense multitude of the dead will rise from their graves. O awful day of wrath and condemnation!

In an instant, thou shalt be judged. Thy conscience, sinful man, thy implacable, unforgetting conscience, will tell thy story to God. There will be no need of witnesses. "I am the Judge and the Witness,' saith the Lord." [1]

Then the whole phalanx of the enemies of God will beat their breasts, and will break out in that heartrending cry of which the Scripture speaks: " 'We have erred.' "[2] "And they shall say to the mountains, 'Cover us,' and to the hills, 'Fall upon us,' "[3] because they cannot endure the gaze of their Victim Who has now become their Judge. Their cries will, however, be unavailing, for on that dread day all reasons for mercy will have become motives for justice.

The infinite goodness of God, the tenderness of His inspirations, the gentle insistence of His calls, will be but additional reasons which aggravate, O sinner, the weight and the punishment of thy offences. Chirst died to save thee, but thou hast damned thyself. The death of Christ will be thy condemnation. "The very nails," exclaims Saint

[1] Jeremias xxix, 23.
[2] Wisdom v, 6.
[3] Osee x, 8.

John Chrysostom, "will then speak. The wounds of Christ will accuse thee, the cross of Christ will rise against thee."

He Who will come to judge thee is the King of Kings. At the moment Christ was condemned to death, standing with sublime majesty before the great ones of His nation, He told them that hereafter they would "see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God and coming in the clouds of Heaven." [1] This solemn warning echoes down through all the centuries and is irrevocable in eternity.

At the present time, no one is more despised than Jesus. He is outraged constantly and apparently with impunity. Nothing is more awful than such a blindness. Meditate, Christian soul, on the approaching judgment of God. The years are passing quickly, and the time of thy earthly probation is nearing the end. Think of thy soul.

[1] Matthew xxvii, 64.

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